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Bible-Class Teachings

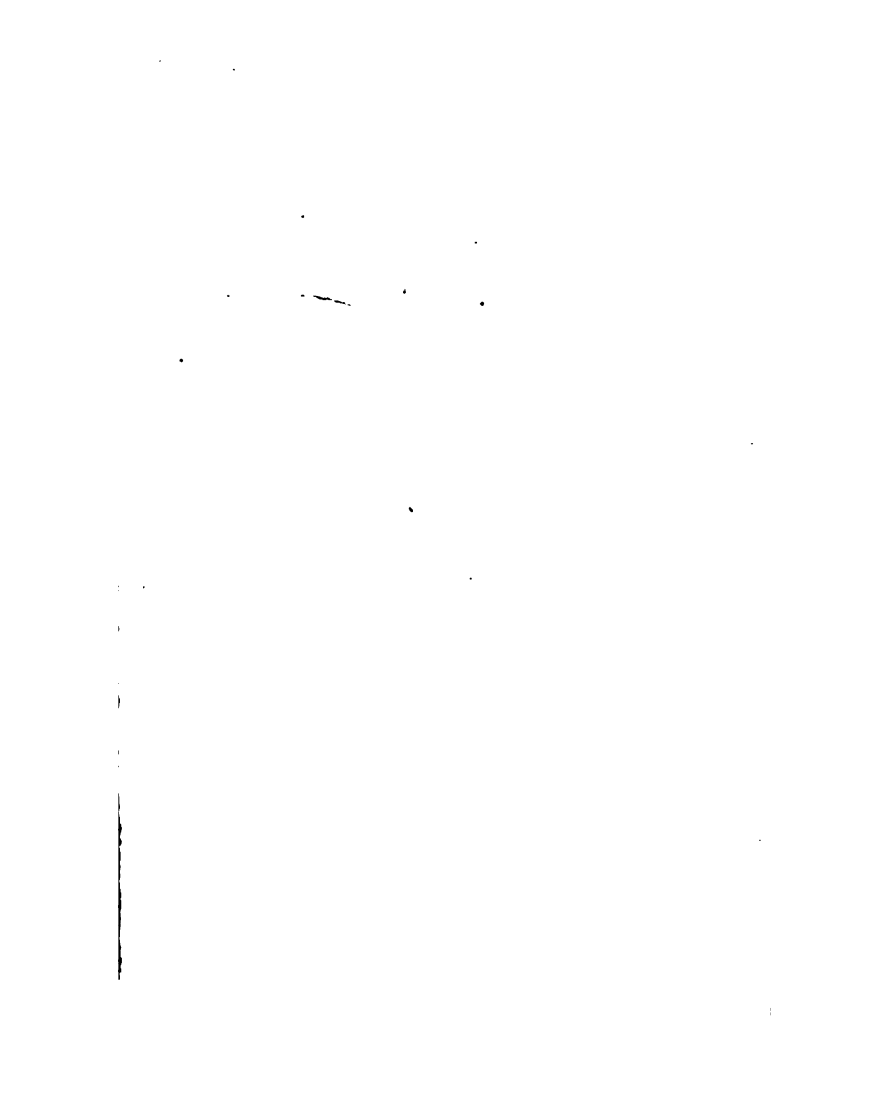




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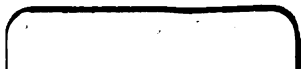
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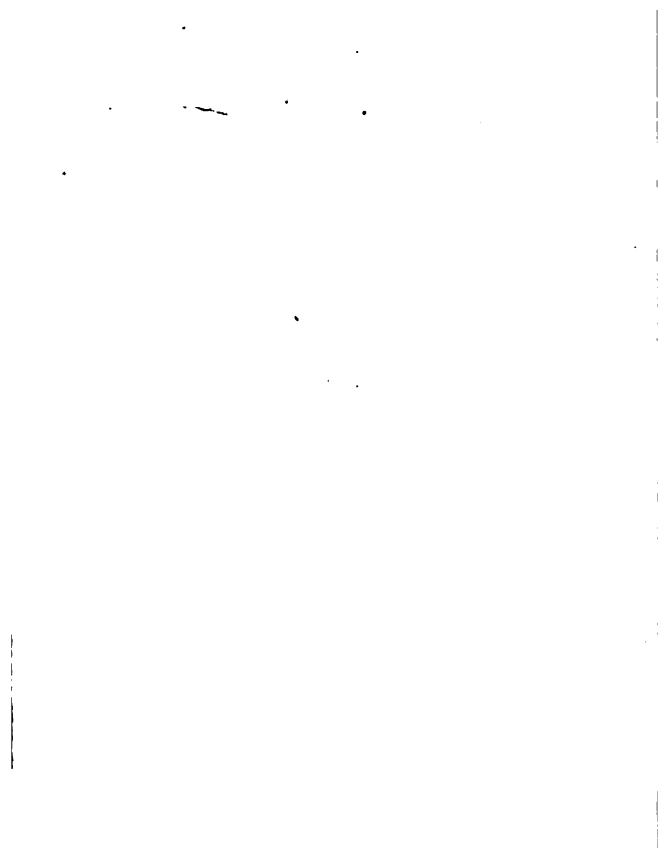
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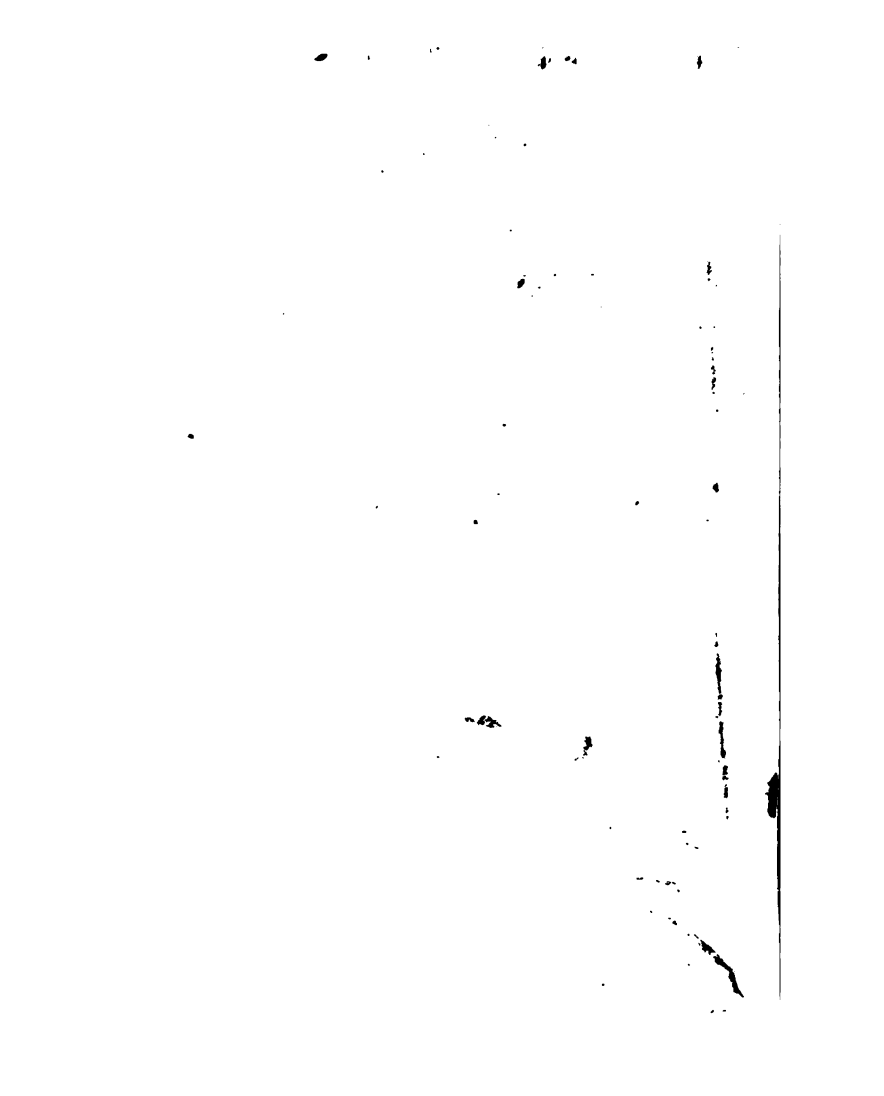


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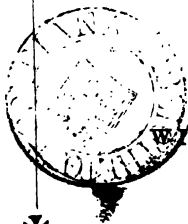


Bible-Class Teachings.



By the Author of
"THE OLD, OLD STORY."

Third Edition.



LONDON:
WILLIAM MACINTOSH,
24, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1871.

101. g 500.

PREFACE.

"IN all labour there is profit:" and the labour of the Teacher is no exception to this rule.

These "BIBLE-CLASS TEACHINGS" are not intended to rob any one of that "profit" which can only be gained by personal "labour."

But it might help a busy or inexperienced Teacher, sometimes, to hear a Lesson given by another Teacher, before preparing his own; especially if provided with a list of the Scripture texts on which that Lesson was founded.

To supply this help, so far as in a printed book it is possible, is the object of Bible-Class Teachings."

They are—what they profess to be—real "Teachings," already given; as some who read them will remember.

At the suggestion of friends, who have found help in their own work from the imperfect "Notes" used at the time, they are now published. Outlines have been filled in, and such alterations have been made as were needed; but in substance they remain the same.

It must be remembered, that these Lessons were written for an adult Bible-Class, and would not be suitable for children.

The Scripture references are, *of course*, the most important part of every Lesson.

Each and all of these must be studied by the Teacher beforehand, and a selection made—according to the capacities of the Class—for use at the time.

It has been found a useful plan, to distribute among the Class a list of these selected texts, after the Lesson. The plan enabled those who heard it to take away all that was most worth remembering, and to share it with others.

Illustrations must be varied. No Teacher can write illustrations for another teacher. And, indeed, those are often the best, which are suggested by some passing circumstance, and are not worth committing to paper. The object of an “illustration”—as the name implies—is to throw light on a subject. And therefore, it must always be taken—as

were those of the Divine Teacher—from things familiar. Those who live among fields and flowers must be taught to “consider the lilies;” while those in town may learn a lesson from “the children . . . in the market-place.” If reverently used, nothing is too homely to be holy. It is among the common things of common life, that we are to learn—and to teach—“lessons” for Eternity.

Nothing controversial will be found in these pages. To apply the “Teachings” of God’s own Word to the practical needs of daily life, has been the writer’s one object, from first at last.

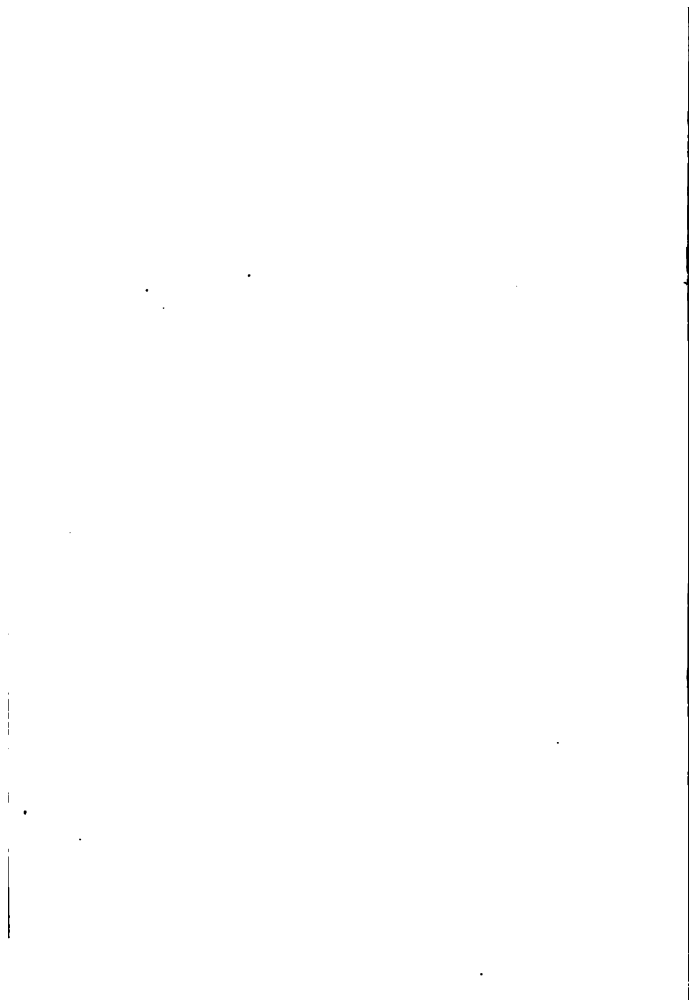
All who engage in the high and holy work of teaching, must give their best—in time, and talents, and labour. We must

not offer to the Master of that which costs us nothing.

But when we have done all, we are "unprofitable servants!"

And while trying to do faithfully the work committed to us, so utterly do our attempts fall short of our aspirings, and so overpowering, sometimes, is the sense of a Teacher's deep and eternal responsibilities, that our feeble hands would hang down altogether, did we not remember that it is written: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD, and not of us!"

October, 1867.



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Bible-Class Teachings.

SUBJECT: "JESUS HIMSELF."

Lesson I. (Introductory.)

"JESUS HIMSELF!" (St. Luke xxiv. 15, 36.)

"None but JESUS
Can do helpless sinners good."

You and I are "helpless sinners," whatever else we may be. And therefore, "none but Jesus" can do us any good.

Is this true?

I believe it myself, and that is why I have chosen as my "Subject," in the course of "Lessons" we begin to-day: "JESUS HIMSELF!"

Do you believe it also? Do you believe and feel that *I* can do you no good? Are

you not expecting too much from me ? Is it not better that I should warn you of this, to begin with ? Is it not right to tell you that, before I meet *you* in this way, I have to meet "Jesus Himself" in secret, and say to Him : "Friend, lend me three loaves ; for these friends of mine, in their journey through life, are come to me, and I have nothing to set before them ! Nothing ! And shall they go away empty ? Lord Jesus, do Thou supply their need ! My expectation is from Thee !" (Luke xi. 5—10. Ps. lxii. 5.)

Expect much from *me*, and you will be disappointed. But expect much from "Jesus Himself," and you will not be disappointed. Come here to meet each other and me, and you will go away starving. But come here to meet "Jesus Himself," and you will go away filled with good things. "He satisfieth !" (Ps. cvii. 9.)

If only we learn this lesson to-day, it will be the best possible beginning. For if this Bible-Class is to do us any good, we must begin by learning *how to use it*.

Nothing is really useful to us, unless we know how to use it.

"The Book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee!" And what is the reply? "I am not learned." (Is. xxix. 12.)

We see this in every-day life.

When medicine is sent, we need "Directions for use." A careless nurse may turn medicine into poison!

With the "Sewing Machine," and other household machines for saving labour, we need the same thing. Without it, those machines are useless to us.

"Bad workmen always find fault with their tools;" while they ought to find fault with their own unskilful fingers. In the hands of a good workman, very poor tools will do good work. I have read in the papers of "a model of Winchester Cathedral, the work of a shepherd, who carved it with no other implement than—a pen-knife!"

Samson did wonders "with the jaw-bone of an ass!" (Judges xv. 15, 16.)

And David (using the best means within his reach, while looking to God for the victory,) "prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone," when Saul's armour would have been useless to him. (1 Sam. xvii. 38—40, 50.)

Now as to this Bible-Class :—will it do you any good, unless you know "how to use" it? (Heb. iv. 2.) It is a "means of grace;" but is it grace itself? Medicine is a "means" of cure; but is it the cure itself? Those machines and tools we have spoken of are "means" of doing work; but are they the work itself? So far from that, the medicine may kill you, and the tools may hurt you and your work, if used the wrong way.

Pause and think! The "medicine" is before you; the "tool" is in your hand, at this very moment.

Will it be useless to you? If so, it will be worse than useless. The "medicine" is strong; the "tool" is sharp. *It must do you good, or harm.*

It does *me* good or harm, to teach this Class. And it does *you* good, or harm, to come to it.

But why do I say "good, or harm?" Because this is a *Bible-Class*. And what is the Bible? "The *Word* of God." (Heb. iv. 12. Eph. vi. 17.) *My* words tell you what *I* wish you to know: and "the Word of God" tells us what *He* wishes us know. Does He then really wish us to know all that is in His "Word?" Yes: that is why He gave us this Bible. (Rom. xv. 4.) And that is why He gives us this Bible-Class. He wishes us "to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth." (1 Tim. ii. 4.)

The Book we are handling, then, contains "the Truth;" and that Truth concerns each of us, personally. (Ps. cxix. 43, 142, 151, 160. John xii. 48.)

If we trifle with it, all the head-knowledge we get will only serve to harden our hearts.

Telling "the Truth," and listening to it, must and will do us harm instead of good, if we do not believe it in our hearts, and try

to act on it in our lives. (Prov. xxi. 25. James iv. 17. 2 Cor. ii. 16.)

You may "enjoy" the Bible-Class, just as you would enjoy "a very lovely song;" for indeed it is a very lovely story that I have to tell! But each time it will be more and more to you like "a very lovely song," and nothing more! It will be to you like a song with words in some foreign language that you do not care even to understand; you hear a "pleasant voice," and the music is pretty: and that is all you care for! (Ezek. xxxiii. 30—32.)

Shall we be wiser? Shall we try to find out "how to use" this Bible-Class, so that it may do us good, and not harm?

I have three Rules for myself. Shall I tell them to you?

1. I must tell you about JESUS. (1 Cor. ii. 2. John xii. 32. Acts iv. 12.)

The Bible is full of Him. (John v. 39. Rev. xix. 10. Luke xxiv. 27, 44. Acts iii. 24.) And my heart must be full of Him

too; that out of the abundance of the heart my mouth may speak. (Matt. xii. 34, 35. Acts iv. 20.) "Jesus Himself" must have the first place in all my "Bible-Class Teachings." (1 Cor. iii. 11.)

2. I must tell Jesus about you. (1 Sam. xii. 23. Mark i. 30.)

He knows all; but He loves and expects me to tell Him all I know. All I am going to do and teach; all I have done, and all I have taught, every time I meet you; and all I see in you that gives me cause to hope or tremble, praise or pray;—all this must be told to my own "Teacher,"—Jesus Himself. I "watch for your souls," as one that "must give account," "with joy," or "with grief," hereafter. The best way of preparing for that, is to "give account" to Him, very often, now. (Heb. xiii. 17. Mark vi. 30.)

3. I must teach you nothing that I have not learnt, or begun to learn, myself.

Christ must be my "Teacher," as well as yours; (John xiii. 13. 1 Cor. xi. 1;) and I must be honestly willing to be "filled with

the knowledge of His Will," (Col. i. 9,) cost what it may.

And now let me give *you* three Rules, that will help you to use this Bible-Class rightly.

1. Look to Jesus.

He is "the life and soul" of any really useful Bible-Class. Come here on purpose to meet Him.

Do you not miss an earthly friend, when you have gone somewhere especially to meet him, and he is not there? Will crowds of other people make it up to you? Come here then, saying, "We would see Jesus!" And you *shall* see Him. (Luke xix. 3—6.) Only set your heart on it; be in earnest about it, like the crowds who waited for hours, to catch a sight of the Princess of Wales, on her arrival.

"Give unto the Lord the honour due unto His name!" Give Him the welcome He deserves. Give Him His right place. And what is that? (Col. i. 18.)

But for "Jesus Himself," the hungry

multitudes might have gone away fasting, though all the disciples were there. (John vi. 5—9.) Remember this, and pray for your "Teacher!" Remember this, and pray for yourselves.

And then, every Sunday evening, these two verses will be full of meaning to us: (1) "Of His Fulness have all we received;" and (2) "JESUS HIMSELF drew near"—drew near at our Bible-Class to-day! (John i. 16. Luke xxiv. 15.)

2. Tell Jesus all you hear about Him. (Matt. xvi. 13, 14.)

When you go home, repeat to Him all that you remember of what you have been taught here, and ask Him if it is *true*. He will let you know, if you really wish to know. (Hosea vi. 3. John vii. 17.) His Word is "able to make thee wise unto salvation." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) What you do not understand here, read or think over again afterwards, in your Saviour's Presence, with honest prayer for the Holy Spirit's teaching. And "Jesus Himself" will "expound" it

to you, by that same Spirit. (Mark iv. 10, 34. John xvi. 12—14.)

3. "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James i. 22.)

If the Word of God has taken root in your heart, let the leaves and the flowers and the fruit appear in their season. (Ps. i. 2, 3. Phil. i. 11. Matt. xiii. 31, 32.)

After each "Lesson," try to put in practice something you have heard; and do it at once! (Ps. cxix. 60.) "Those things which ye have learned, *do!*" (Phil. iv. 9.)

And then, "the God of Peace shall be with you!" He shall make this Bible-Class, however poor may be its "Teachings," a "means of grace" indeed; a "means" by which you shall "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of"—"Jesus Himself!"

Lesson II.

“JESUS HIMSELF”—THE SON OF GOD.

Hebrews i.

BETWEEN eighteen and nineteen hundred years ago, in a country a long way off, lived and died—a poor Man.

If you had asked the people of that country where he was born, they would have told you—in a stable!—Where he was brought up? In a poor little town called Nazareth, they would have said; and very likely they would have added—“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

And can you tell me anything about his parents? O yes! his father and mother we knew. He was the carpenter’s son, and his mother’s name was Mary.—How did

he spend his time? He used to be known as "the Carpenter," till he was about thirty years of age; and then he began to preach, and went about doing good.—Did he live to be old? No; he lived only three years after he left home.—Cut off so young? How did he meet with his death—some accident, or sudden illness? No; he was hanged on a tree! crucified, and put to shame openly!—Why, what evil had he done? None; but the citizens hated him; his own nation delivered him up to be crucified!

I will finish the story.

One faithful friend of His asked if he might have that poor mangled dead Body—pierced by a cruel soldier even after the life had gone out of it,—and they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre.

But soon after, a report got about that the grave was empty, though it had been carefully watched; and that this strange, lonely, ill-treated Man had come to life again! His enemies tried to hush it up, and

told the soldiers on guard to say that His friends had stolen away the Body while they slept. But how could they have seen this, if they were asleep?—His friends give a different account. They say that He really came to life again, and spent forty days with them, though He never let His enemies see Him again. And then, they say, a cloud received Him out of their sight, and He was carried up into heaven !

A wonderful Man this must have been ! A wonderful story is this ! Have you ever heard it before ? Do you think it is true ? Is it fiction, or “founded on fact,” or—fact itself, every word of it ; as much a fact as that I have been telling it to you ? Are you quite sure ?

(See Luke ii. 7, 39. John i. 46 ; vi. 42. Matt. xiii. 55. Mark vi. 3. Luke iii. 23. Matt. iv. 17. Acts x. 38. Is. liii. 8. Acts v. 30. Luke xxiii. 22. Acts xiii. 28. Luke xix. 14. John xviii. 35 ; xix. 38, 34. Acts xiii. 29. Luke xxiv. 22—24. Matt. xxviii. 1—15. Acts i. 3, 9. Luke xxiv. 51.)

Now turn to the chapter we began with. (Heb. i.) Look through it quickly. Is it the same sort of story as the story I have just told you? Does it seem to describe the same sort of person—poor, despised, rejected, persecuted to death?

Yet is it another, or “Jesus Himself?”

But I do not find His Name mentioned, all through the chapter! How then can I be sure it is the same—is there even one line in the chapter like the story you have just heard? Not in v. 1; nor in v. 2; we must look further.

Read v. 3. Perhaps we shall find it there. He “sat down on the right hand of God,” &c. And my story said that this “wonderful Man” “was carried up into heaven;” so this seems to agree.

But look again: when did He sit down at God’s right hand—“when He had” done what? Yes, “by Himself purged our sins.” *How* He “purged our sins,” you know; my story has told you, and most likely you have heard that story very often already.

Then who was that strange, lonely Man we have been talking of;—was He only a “wonderful Man,” or was He more than Man? Did His real Life begin with His Life on earth?

This chapter shall show us; and remember, that whatever God’s Word tells us, He wishes us to know. (See p. 5.)

What this chapter contains, is marked at the top, in some of our Bibles: “Christ, in these last times coming to us from the Father, is preferred above the angels, both in Person and Office.”

This is very clearly put. Yes, the angels, are glorious, both in Person and Office; (Matt. xxviii. 2—4. Ps. ciii. 20;) but “Jesus Himself,” from all Eternity, was more glorious still.

I. Jesus—as He was from Eternity—is more glorious in “Person,” than the angels.

For (v. 2) Who was He, from all Eternity? God’s own—? (“Son!”) A son is dear to his father—not for what he does, but—for what he is; not for the sake of any “office”

he fills, (however well he may do it,) but for his own sake; he is dear "in Person"—personally dear—to his father. Would not his father be angry, if that son were despised and rejected? Would the Queen be pleased, if the Prince of Wales were treated without respect? (See Matt. xxi. 37. John v. 20, 23. Luke ix. 35.)

Jesus is the "Son" of God, and dear to God, as Isaac was to Abraham. Think of that, when you read Rom. viii. 32! And think of that, you who do not love Jesus at all, or love Him very little! Jesus Christ must be personally "dear" to you, or your thoughts are very unlike God's thoughts of Him. God's "Dear Son" must be your dear Saviour! (1 Pet. i. 8.)

Now turn to v. 5. Does God call the angels His sons? Not one of them. Then see what a Saviour you have! He is "above the angels." He is God's own "Son!"

II. And Jesus is more glorious than the angels, in His "Office."

For what else is Jesus to His Father, besides being a "Son?" God has "appointed" Him—? ("Heir of all things.") Jesus is "the only-begotten Son of God;" (John iii. 18;) and so the Father "hath given all things into His hand." (John iii. 35.)

There is only one way to get anything from God: but, in that one way, you may get "all things." You must be joined to Christ—one with Christ—by faith. Those who are one with Christ are "heirs of God through Christ," and "joint-heirs with Christ!" (Gal. iv. 7. Rom. viii. 17.) And if so, they are heirs of "all things!"

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called—the Sons of God"—the "Heirs of salvation!" (1 John iii. 1. V. 14.)

The angels never rise to that! They are God's "ministers"—*i.e.*, servants. (V. 7.)

When Jesus was on earth, they were "sent forth to minister" to Him. (Matt. iv. 11. Luke xxii. 43.) And now that He is on His "Throne," at God's "right

hand," they all "worship" Him. (Vv. 8, 3, 6.)

Those who are "joint-heirs with Christ" may hope to share even that throne! (Rev. iii. 21.)

But the angels will never rise to that! They are—"all" of them—what?—"Ministering spirits.") Perhaps they help us more than we think for; but their "office" is simply "ministering." They are God's servants, worshipping the "Heir," and by Him "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

See how, "in all things," Jesus Himself has the "pre-eminence!" (Col. i. 18.)

Once more, turn to v. 2. "By whom also He made the worlds!" Jesus is God's "Son"—and "Heir"—and—what else? His Fellow-Worker!" (Compare Prov. viii. 22—31, with John i. 3. In the German translation of Prov. viii. 30, we find: "I was His Master-Workman!") Is any passage of the Old Testament quoted in this chapter, to

prove it? In which verse? (Vv. 10—12.) What passage? (Ps. cii. 25—27.)

Do you enjoy this thought enough—you that love Jesus? Do you ever look up to Him—your own Saviour—when you see beautiful things in nature, and say: “THY handiwork!—These are all the work of THY hands!” Are you glad they were “made by Him,” and that “without Him was not anything made that was made?” (Ps. xix. i. John i. 3.) Do you see JESUS in it all—“Jesus Himself,”—“the Arm of the Lord,” “by Whom He made the worlds,” as well as redeemed this world of ours?

“To whom is the Arm of the Lord *revealed*?” (Is. liii. 1.)

(V. 3.) Come and get one more glimpse of Jesus in Glory! Can you explain to me these words: “The brightness of His Glory, and the express Image of His Person?” No; nor I to you! It is “too high for me.” (Ps. cxxxi. 1.) No words can express, and no heart can picture, the Glory of God

the Son—"the Glory which I had with Thee"—He says to His Father—"before the world was." (John xvii. 5.) We can only look at the words before us, till we feel like St. Paul, who "could not see, for the glory of that light!" (Acts xxii. 11.)

And is this glorious God the same Jesus Whom we seem to know so well in His life on earth? Is it the same Jesus Whom we may talk to, and have with us, in our daily life, now? Is it "JESUS HIMSELF?"

Yes! He left that Glory for awhile—of His own free will He left it all!

Tell me *why*. (2 Cor. viii. 9. John iii. 17 1 Tim. i. 15.)

And when He went back, had He done the work He came for? Yes; "He had—by Himself—purged our sins!" (Heb. ix. 11—14; x. 1—14.)

"IT IS FINISHED!" "Believest thou this?"



Lesson III.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—THE SON OF MAN.

Hebrews ii. 14—18.

LAST Sunday, we thought of Jesus "as He was from all Eternity:" "better than the angels," with "a more excellent Name than they."

Who was it that, before this world was made, was "daily" God's "delight, rejoicing always before Him?" When God "prepared the heavens," Who was there? In the form of God? Equal with God? (Phil. ii. 6.) God Himself? (John i. 1; x. 30.)

But, for the sake of some enemies of His who had rebelled against Him in a little world not half so big as many of the stars you see at night, He left all this Glory, and "came into the world,"—into this little world of ours!

In what form did He appear? "In the form of God," as when He was at home in Glory? In the form of angels? No, verily! "He took not on Him the nature of angels;" nor their form. But why? Was it because He was "so much better than the angels" that He could not stoop so low? Did He really stoop as low as that? And lower still? "Lower than the angels?" Then what form did He take upon Him? (Phil. ii. 7.)

"A servant!" Did He, who was in the form of God—equal with God—His Son—the "Heir of all things," really take upon Him "the form of a servant?"

But, as we saw last Sunday, the *angels* are God's "ministers," or servants. So perhaps "the form of a servant" only means—the form of an angel? Finish the verse just begun. "He took upon him the form of a servant," and—? what follows? "Was made in the likeness of—men!"

Yes, "God was manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) "Great is the mystery!" We must not try to understand it. But

great is the blessing it brings to us, if we believe it with our hearts.

I want you to grasp it firmly to-day—this Truth—that Jesus was Man, as truly as ever He was God.

But does it really matter? Does it matter to *us*?

Why do I ask this?

“Because I do not like leaving the “application” of a “lesson” to the very last. I think the “application” ought to come at the beginning!

Why so? Because we must be sure that the Truth we search for is of importance to us; or else, why should we take the trouble of searching for it? Do you look carefully for a thing you do not care to find? Have you never noticed what a difference it makes in the way people look for anything they have lost, whether or not they really feel the loss?

The woman in the parable, who lost one of her ten pieces of silver, really cared to find it. Anybody could see that, by the

way she set about searching for it ! Why did she take all that trouble ? And why was she so pleased when she found it again ? Because it was her own money, and she had felt the loss of it. "I have found the piece which I had lost !" (Luke xv. 8—10.)

How often people answer, when asked about things they have seen, or heard spoken of, without feeling interested in them : "I don't know ; it did not concern me ; I was thinking of something else all the time !"

Well then, does this subject "concern" you ? Does it matter to you and me, whether or not Jesus was "perfect Man," as well as "perfect God ?"

In the verses we have read to-day, (Heb. ii. 14—18,) you will find the answer : *i.e.*, you will find why it was necessary for us that Jesus should be Man as well as God.

I. (Vv. 14, 15.) It was necessary for our Salvation.

For what purpose was "the Son of God manifested ?" "That He might destroy the

works of the Devil." (1 John iii. 8.) The work of the Devil for man's ruin began in Eden. He met Adam there, and led him into—? (Sin.) In this way, Sin entered into the world; and what else? Death. (Rom. v. 12; vi. 23.)

There was only one way to conquer the Devil, and deliver his poor captives! Jesus undertook it, though he knew there was only this one way. And what was this one way? "Through Death." Vv. 14, 9. Ch. x. 5—10. 1 Pet. ii. 24. John xii. 27.)

And now, what has become of death? Can it hurt those who believe in Jesus? (John xi. 26.) No: its "sting" is gone, and you know, a bee that has lost its sting dies soon afterwards! Death itself is dead, as far as any power to hurt is concerned. "Death is swallowed up in victory!" (1 Cor. xv. 54—57.) "Jesus Christ . . hath abolished death." (2 Tim. i. 10.) And so, when people see this clearly, and believe it for themselves, what becomes of the "fear of death," which used to make them

as miserable as prisoners under sentence of punishment? It is conquered. Christ has set them free. (John viii. 36.) So they can say: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory"—through Whom? (1 Cor. xv. 57.)

II. For our Comfort.

We want something more than the hope of "victory" over "the last enemy." (1 Cor. xv. 26.) We have other enemies to meet and conquer first. We want sympathy during the conflict.

Jesus is our High Priest; and He offered His own Body as a sacrifice for our sins. (Heb. viii. 3; ix. 26; x. 10, 14.)

But we want more than this, of our High Priest. We want the High Priest Himself! We want to know—not only what He has done for us, but what He feels towards us—what He *is* to us."

The sort of High Priest you and I want, we see in Heb. v. 1, 2. One "Who can have compassion" on poor, ignorant, helpless beings, such as we are.

But what sort of compassion?—for there are two sorts. One sort looks down on us from a distance! Do you care for that sort of compassion? The other sort comes down to us, and says: “I can feel for you;” I am myself “acquainted with grief.” Do you not care for that sort? It is called sympathy.

It is a precious thing! Which would you rather have, a cold gift from some one who does not care for you, or—even a look of real fellow-feeling, though from a stranger? O the good that such a look has done, in this sorrowing world of ours, many and many a time! And if that look, or the word, of sympathy, comes from an old and tried friend, is it not more precious still?

Do you think there are many people in the world who do not care for sympathy? Many there are, who do not like noisy sympathy; but few, I think, who do not like at least silent sympathy. We all need it, in one way or another.

But can we get real sympathy from any one who has never suffered? And if Jesus

had never been made "like unto His brethren," could He have given us real sympathy ? Then it matters to us whether or not Jesus was Man, because—? (We need His Sympathy. Heb. iv. 15.)

Now let us search the Scriptures, as those who have a real treasure to search for ; and see if we can find out, from other parts beside this, that Jesus was really Man. (1 Tim. ii. 5. John i. 14.)

Turn to the Gospel Stories ; especially those written by St. Luke. He tells us of Jesus' birth (ii. 7)—growth in wisdom and stature—in man's favour, and in God's. (ii. 52.)

He shews us, eight times, in his Gospel, that Jesus was a Man of prayer. (iii. 21 ; v. 16 ; vi. 12 ; ix. 18 ; ix. 29 ; xi. 1 ; xxii. 32 ; xxii. 41—45.)

And has Jesus ever known hunger, and thirst, and weariness ? (Luke iv. 2. Mark xi. 12. John iv. 6, 7 ; xix. 28.) Temptation, too ? (Luke iv. 1—13.) Poverty ? (Luke ix. 58.) Unkindness and treachery from

friends? (Luke xxii. 21, 61.) Pain—Agony? (Luke xxii. 44.) *Want of sympathy?* (Luke xxiii. 35—37. Ps. xxii. 6—8, 11, 17; lxix. 7, 8, 20, 21. Is. liii. 3.)

If all this is true, need *you* ever want for sympathy, or feel alone in the world?

And it *is* true, thank God! "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

What then? Cast all your care upon Him; for "He careth for you!" (1 Pet. v. 7.)



LESSON IV.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—"TEMPTED LIKE AS WE
ARE."

St. Matthew iv. 1—11.

"JESUS Himself!" It is a subject long enough for eternity! (Rev. v. 9.) "The sweet story of old" will be the "new song" in heaven. We shall never grow tired of it there!

Do you think you are likely to grow tired of it here, in this Bible-Class? If you do, it will be my fault, or yours. Prevent it, by prayer. "Give us, day by day, our daily bread," that we may "grow thereby!" (Luke xi. 3. John vi. 32—35; xvii. 3. 2 Pet. iii. 18. 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.)

Now let us see how far we have got in the story. The proverb says: "Most haste, worst speed." We will not hurry over the ground. We will make sure of our footing,

at each step. We want strong work, that will stand the wear and tear of life; so every stitch must go back a little, as well as forward.

Let us go back, then, to see what we have learnt.

(1.) "Jesus Himself" must have the place of honour in this Class, if we are to get any good here.

(2.) "Jesus Himself," from all Eternity, was "above the angels, both in Person and Office."

(3.) Jesus Himself "was made Man:" He was "made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death." And so, we find in Jesus all we want;—"a merciful and faithful High Priest," able to make atonement for our sins, and to give us sympathy in our sorrows. "For, verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels; but"—can you finish the verse? ("He took on Him the seed of Abraham." Heb. ii. 16.) And now, He is "not ashamed to call" us "brethren!"

Last Sunday, we saw Jesus in "the form of a servant;" "in the likeness of men." We saw Him, in the Gospel stories, hungry and thirsty, like other "men:" and poor; and suffering, too; and—anything else, do you remember? (Tempted.)

But one passing look at Jesus *tempted*—it is not enough. Three of the four Gospels tell us about it; and what God tells us so often, He must wish us to think about a great deal. He must know that we need it much.

And I think we do need this story! It concerns you and me! If we search in it "as for hid treasures," we shall find something to our advantage!

But how can it "apply" to us—why does it concern us,—whether or not Jesus was ever really tempted? Turn to Heb. ii. 18. "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." "*Them that are tempted!*" But who are they?—for, of course, to *them* it does matter very much, whether or not "He Himself hath

suffered being tempted;”—*they* must want “succour”—help—sympathy, such as they can only get from One who “Himself hath suffered being tempted.” Who, then, are these “tempted” people? We ourselves? You, as well as I? And I, as well as you? Do believe it! I am one of you:—fighting by your side, not looking on at the battle from a safe distance; tempted, as truly as you are, though perhaps not in the same way.

Well, then, we are—all of us—“tempted,” in one way or another. And so, we all need the sympathy of Jesus in temptation. In all the other trials of life, we need that sympathy; but most of all in temptation. For this is the worst of all. If we could but conquer Satan always—if we could be always “good”—we should be always happy; at times “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” (2 Cor. vi. 10.) And if everybody around us were always good too,—“good,” like the people Jesus talks of in His Sermon on the Mount—humble, meek, anxious about nothing but righteousness; merciful, pure,

and peacemaking! Only think, how pleasant it would be! Would not all the other trials of life seem easy to bear?

So you see how much we need Jesus in the temptations of life! You see how much of our happiness in life depends on the question: Is Jesus able to succour them that are tempted? And to find out this, we must get the answer to another question: Was He tempted like as we are?

Now read Heb. ii. 18, once more, slowly and reverently; and if it applies to you, take it home to your heart!

Was Jesus, then, really tempted? By the same Tempter that you and I have to meet and conquer? And are we allowed to know how Jesus met and conquered him? Then, surely, if we follow His steps, He will give us help and sympathy in the battle, and victory at last.

But now, as to the kind of temptations Jesus met: are they what ours are likely to be?

I. Are we ever tempted to doubt God's

Promises, and try to get right things by wrong means, or to take them at a wrong time, or in a wrong measure? For instance: If poor, are we ever tempted to steal, for bodily wants; or to get a living in a way displeasing to God? Or, if not poor, are we tempted to indulge ourselves more than is good for our souls? If so, it would help us very much, next time we are tempted in this way, to know and remember that "Jesus Himself" has met this same temptation, and conquered it.

II. Are we ever tempted to make a wrong use of God's Promises—to *presume* on them,—in order to gain some advantage or avoid some evil, for ourselves or for others? For instance:—Are we ever tempted to run wilfully into danger, or shrink from an appointed cross or a plain duty, or seek the praise of man more than the praise of God, and then flatter ourselves that God will still protect and bless and use us, because we are His children?—Does Jesus Himself know what this temptation is, by experience?

III. Are we ever tempted by "the pomps and vanity of this wicked world"—tempted to try and "gain the whole world," or as much of it as we can, even though we should lose our own souls in the struggle? And suppose Jesus Himself was "tempted like as we are," in this point also! Would not the thought of this be a great help to us?

Yes, if indeed He "was—in all points—tempted—like as we are, yet without sin," may we not look to Him, in all our temptations, for sympathy? And for succour—*i.e.*, help? And for victory?

Come then with me, and look at the picture given us in St. Matthew's Gospel of—JESUS TEMPTED!

Do not think I have kept you away too long. Ten minutes spent in thus looking, with a prepared heart, will do you more good than an hour spent over it as if it were an idle tale that has nothing to do with you. Come with a prepared heart—an interested heart—a softened heart—a reverent heart;

for it is holy ground! Come and look at the Captain of your salvation, leading the way in the battle which you have to fight!

1. (Vv. 1—3.) We are in “the wilderness.” It is a deserted place; no living creatures to be seen, except “the wild beasts.” (Mark i. 13.)

Stay, who is that? One lonely Man is here, in this lonely place. He has been here alone, for forty days. He is worse than alone! No man is near Him; but, in that hour of weakness—for He is weak with fasting—an Evil Being stands by Him.

Listen! What is that Evil One saying to the Holy One?

1. “If Thou be the Son of God,” &c. Was He “the Son of God?” And yet, really hungry? (Luke iv. 2.) It must have been hard to bear! Do *you* like being taunted in this way?—“If” you can do, or are, or have, this or that? And what, if the thing you are tempted to do, in order to prove you can answer the taunt, is the very thing you would like to do, if it were

—.

not wrong! Does not this make it still harder to bear? Next time, then, that you suffer from this temptation, pause, and think: "Jesus Himself" has gone before me here! And change that thought of Jesus, into a prayer to Jesus: "Lord, help me! Thou art able to succour them that are tempted, for Thou Thyself hast suffered being tempted!"

2. Again we hear the Tempter's voice. (Vv. 5,6.) What now? Another taunt? Another "if?" "If"—what? "If Thou be the Son of God." Do what? "Cast Thyself down!" "For *it is written*," he adds,—using the Word of God, as Jesus had done, but altering it to suit his own purposes,—“He shall give His angels charge,” &c. (See Ps. xci. 11.) But what would be the object of doing this? Why, would not the worshippers below, in the Temple Court, be astonished to see Him come down among them, unhurt, from such a high place? Perhaps, (and this is what I think Satan wanted to suggest,) they might even be convinced at once that Jesus was “the Son of God,” and so He might

gather His people together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, (Matt. xxiii. 37,) and save Himself all further pain and trouble! Was this an easy temptation to bear? Would not *you* have found it tempting—to win so much praise, and escape so much suffering? Then remember,—when next you need it—Here also, Jesus has fought and conquered. And pray the prayer in faith: “Lord, help me!”

3. Once more we hear that voice! (Vv. 8, 9.) And this time it says—? “All these things”—all what things? Were they all in sight at the moment? (Compare Luke iv. 5.) And all promised—on one condition. What was that? Just one wrong act,—and then—all this power and influence!

Are many men and women led away by this temptation, now? Are we ever tempted to be among them? So was Jesus Himself; but—He conquered!

“See, your Captain leads the way!
Onward, Christian, win the day!”

(V. 11.) Presently, "the Devil leaveth Him." Who has won the day, Jesus, or Satan?

Come close to the Conqueror; see! He is weary with the battle, and angels minister to Him!

What is the secret of His victory? What weapon has He been using? It is "the Sword of the Spirit, which is"—? ("The Word of God!" Eph. vi. 17.) Yes, each time the Devil tempted Him, He answered—not—*I* say, (though He might have done it!) but—GOD says! "It is written!"

Read the three texts He chose (from the book of Deuteronomy) as answers to Satan. Learn them "by heart." Lay them up in your heart, and lay up many others by their side, from this Holy Word, to be ready for use in time of need. (Ps. cxix. 11.)

Would you conquer? Then,—not only look to Jesus for sympathy and help, but—use the Sword He used. "There is no sword like that!"—as David said of Goliath's. Yet that was the sword of a

conquered man. This is the Sword of a Conqueror! Take it. Use it. Come here to learn how to use it. Study your Bibles when you are alone, to learn how to use it. For if ever you are to be "mighty" in the war with Satan, you must be "mighty in the Scriptures!" (Acts xviii. 24.)

Fight on, then, a little longer! (Rom. xvi. 20. Rev. ii. 8—11.)

"Fight, nor think the battle long:
Soon shall victory tune your song."

Fight, as in the Presence of Jesus. (Matt. xxviii. 20. Is. lv. 4. See Josh. v. 13, to vi. 2.) Fight, with the Sword of Jesus. (Heb. iv. 12. Eph. vi. 11—13. 2 Cor. x. 4.) Fight, in the Strength of Jesus. (Eph. vi. 10. 2 Tim. ii. 1, 3. Phil. iv. 13.) "Resist the Devil, and He will flee from you:" (1 Pet. v. 8, 9. James iv. 7:) and again and again it shall be true of you, as it was of "Jesus Himself:" "Then the Devil leaveth Him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him!"

Lesson V.

THE DAY WITH—"JESUS HIMSELF."

St. John i. 35—39.

THE Psalmist of old said: "I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil!" (Ps. cxix. 162.) And yet, *his* Bible did not reach even as far as the place where "the Psalms" are put in *our* Bibles! He would indeed have rejoiced, "as one that findeth great spoil," if he could have seen the things which we see, in the chapter now before us.

Turn to 2 Chron. xx. 25. See how men "rejoice" over "great spoil!"

We shall be, or ought to be, like those men, to-day. There is more in these five verses than we can "carry away!" It would take us "three days" at least, and we have but an hour!

We have no time to lose; so let us pause

a moment—for that time is never wasted, which is spent in prayer,—and let each heart among us say: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth!” [Pause, for silent prayer.]

And now, in the presence of the living, listening Jesus, let us read this story.

(V. 35.) “The next day.” Next,—after what? Are we told what had happened the day before? (V. 29.) And that, again, was “the next day” after John the Baptist had been speaking of Jesus to the “Priests and Levites” sent from Jerusalem.

What had he said of Jesus, on the first of those three days? (V. 27.) And on the “next day?” (Vv. 29—34.) This second day, he spoke of Jesus, with Jesus in sight; so he had more to say.

Once more, on “the next day” to that—*i.e.*, the third of these three days,—what do we hear him saying? The same thing over again!. (V. 36.)

Read that 29th verse once more. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!”

What! the sin of the whole world? (Is. liii. 6. 1 John ii. 2.) And is *your* sin a part of "the sin of the world?" If so, your sin was "laid on Him:" and you may go free!

I wish you all believed this! If you did— if you really believed it, you would all be at peace. But all I can do is to show you this "great spoil"—this great treasure,—and say: "Lay hold of it yourselves!" I can only repeat the message, and pray God to send it to your heart: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

(V. 36 again.) But what was John the Baptist doing himself, when he told the others to look at Jesus? Yes, it was while he himself was "looking upon Jesus," that "he saith, Behold!"

And why is it, do you suppose, that some people seem always wanting others to look at Jesus? Because they are "looking upon Jesus" themselves, and it makes them happy. If you want to win others to look that way, you must be looking that way

yourself. The very example is contagious! Have you not noticed how one after another will turn round and look back, if one person sets the example?

Let us ask ourselves: Are *we* looking up to Jesus so earnestly, as to persuade others that He is a real, living Saviour?

You that know Jesus, take care—for others' sake as well as your own—not to lose sight of Him. You must be always "looking upon Jesus;" and then, whether you speak the words aloud or not, your very *look* will be always saying: "Behold the Lamb of God!"

(V. 37.) These two men heard his earnest words, and saw his earnest look; and what effect did it have on them? ("They followed Jesus.") That was better than staying to look at John the Baptist himself; and it must have pleased him much better.

Those who really love Christ are always wanting to lead others—not to sit down at *their* feet, but—to go to "Jesus Himself," and sit at *His* feet! They are glad to hear

any one whom they have taught about Jesus, say: "I do not need you now: Jesus Himself is all I need: now I believe, not because of thy saying; for I have heard Him myself!" (John iv. 42.)

"The two disciples heard *him* speak, and they followed JESUS!"

Notice these two words: they "heard;" they "followed." They could not have "followed" Jesus, unless they had first "heard" of Him, could they? (Rom. x. 14.) But might they have "heard," and not "followed?" (Rom. x. 16.)

Have *you* heard of Jesus? Before to-day? And to-day again? Then, for all Eternity, the responsibility is upon you. Face the question, and answer it silently to God: Do you mean to "follow" Jesus? If your heart's answer is: "By the grace of God, I do!"—you shall never regret it. In Heaven itself, your greatest joy will be—the joy you begin to taste this very day—to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." (Rev. xiv. 4.)

(V. 38.) And now we come to "Jesus

Himself!" We have left John the Baptist, and we will draw near to HIM! We will follow Him "whithersoever He goeth," and find out where He dwells, and hear His own voice at last! Will He notice us? Will He see how we care to know Him? Will He see us following? Read the answer in Heb. xiii. 8. What He was "yesterday," He is "to-day." This story shall tell us what He was "yesterday."

"Jesus turned!" It is not the last time we read of Jesus doing this; and it seems to make the scene so real to us! (See Mark v. 30. Matt. xvi. 23. Luke xxii. 61.) He stands, as it were, face to face with the soul, while He speaks to it. He makes us feel He is looking at us—into us—through us! (Rev. ii. 18.)

He "saw them following!"—And if *you* have really said in your heart, since we began our Reading to-day: "I will follow Jesus!"—has He not seen that first step towards Him? Who was the first to see the returning Prodigal? (Luke xv. 20.) And St. Paul,

after his conversion? (Acts ix. 11—15.)
Compare Jer. xxxi. 18. Is. xlii. 3.)

Again turn to v. 38. (Was I not right in saying that "there is more in these five verses than we can carry away?" There is so much still! We must make haste!)

When Jesus "saw them following," what did He say? Was it not kind of Him to speak to them Himself? John had told them that Jesus was greater than he—that he himself was "not worthy" to offer Him the meanest service, or, as they used to express it, "unloose" His "shoe's latchet." And now, this great man stops and speaks to them Himself! How His gentle voice must have thrilled through them!—Do *you* know what it is, when you have been seeking Jesus, to hear Him speaking to you Himself? Do you "know His Voice!" (John x. 4.) If not, do not rest till you have heard it!

What did He ask? ("What seek ye?") Did He not know? (Yes.) Then why did He ask?—And when *you* kneel down to pray, does He not know what you want? Yes,

but He wishes to hear it from yourself. Next time you pray—this very moment, if you are trying to pray in your heart—try to believe that Jesus stands face to face with you, and gently asks: “What seek ye?”

When Jesus asked the two disciples this, what did they answer? (“Where dwellest Thou?”) It was Jesus Himself that they were seeking. If only they might stay with Him, it was all they cared for.

If He were to ask each of *you* the same question: “What seek ye?”—what would your answer be? “Great things for thyself?” (See Jer. xlv. 5.) Riches? (Luke xii. 20, 21.) Worldly pleasure? (1 Tim. v. 6.) The praise of man? (Matt. vi. 1.) Or—“Jesus Himself?” If so, “fear not ye!” (Matt. xxviii. 5; vii. 7, 8.)

(V. 39.) He speaks again. Does He blame them? Or hide Himself from them? Or say, Go away, for I am holier than you? No! His words are just like Himself! “Come and see.”

“Come!” He loves to use that word;

(John vii. 37. Matt. xi. 28; xxv. 34;) and He loves to hear you use it too. (Numb. x. 29. Rev. xxii. 17.)

"See!" It is better than any descriptions. Do you not find that one real look at a thing is worth many words about it? "O taste and see!" says David, when he has been telling us "how gracious the Lord is" to him and to many others. (Ps. xxxiv. 1—8.)

Did they "come and see?" And when "they came and saw where He dwelt," what sort of a place was it?—After all, we are never told that! And why?

There is much to learn from the blanks left in God's Word. Shall I tell you why I think this is left a blank? Because it was not the place that mattered, but the Person whose Presence filled the place. "They abode *with Him* that day!"

A day with Jesus! Be it spent where it may, it is Heaven on earth! For "in **THY** Presence is fulness of joy!" (Ps. xvi. 11.)

LESSON VI.

“COME AND SEE”—“JESUS HIMSELF.”

St. John i. 40—46.

THUS it spreads,—the knowledge of Jesus. From place to place—from heart to heart!

Just what we want! Do not *we* want the knowledge of Jesus to spread from place to place—from heart to heart? Then this story—like the rest—“applies to us!” Let us search through it, “as for hid treasures;” perhaps we may find out how to get our heart’s desire!

You remember how it all began—who it was that first pointed out Jesus to others? (John the Baptist. Vv. 35, 36.) Yes; “looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold!” And then—? The two disciples that “heard him speak” went and “followed

Jesus." And when Jesus "turned," and invited them to come with Him, they—? ("Came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.")

"That day!" No matter *where* they spent it—they "abode with HIM!" No matter *how* they spent it—*i.e.*, what they did, during those happy hours:—whether they sat still in the house, or went out with Him;—whether they asked questions and got answers from Him, or only sat and listened;—whether they watched Him while He prayed silently or went about His Father's business in other ways, or whether He prayed with them, and let them work with Him at anything He had to do.—No matter! they were "with HIM!" Never would they forget "that day!" They had learnt to know "Jesus Himself."

Now see the effect of "that day," so far as we are allowed to watch it.

(V. 40.) "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed" Jesus, was—?

(Andrew.) We read of him as "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother," because Peter became a greater man than he, in the Church of Christ. Now what is the first thing Andrew does, on leaving Jesus? He finds his brother; what for? And takes him—where? We seem to have the story of John the Baptist over again! "Looking upon Jesus," he saith, Look! "Thus it spreads—the knowledge of Jesus!"

(V. 43.) But does it stop here? No. "The day following"—for Jesus never wasted a day, though as yet we do not know how He spent each day, (see John xxi. 25.)—Jesus "findeth Philip," and invites him to come with Him into Galilee. (Read v. 43 again; with ch. ii. 1, 2, 11.)

(V. 44.) "Now Philip was of Bethsaida;" he belonged to the same city as Andrew and Peter. It is called a "city," but it was not a large place, like some of our cities; and perhaps Philip had just heard, from those two brothers, about the happy time Andrew had had with Jesus, and how he

had gone back again that same evening, (for this was only "the day following,") to take Peter to his new Friend. From what we know of Peter afterwards, it is not likely he would wait till morning! And perhaps he had come back and told Philip.

Or perhaps Philip was—*the other one* of those "two disciples" who had spent the day with Jesus! From what we know of Philip afterwards, he was slow to "take in" new ideas, and could not believe a thing without strong proof. (Ch. vi. 7; xiv. 8—11.) However much he enjoyed "that day," he was just the sort of man who would have liked to go home and think over it quietly, before making up his mind what he really believed about it, and before speaking to any one else on the subject. And if so, it seems only natural—only just what we should expect from other stories in this Book—that Jesus should go and find him out, "the day following," and put the finishing touch to the work by saying, in His own loving way: "Follow Me." (Compare ch. v. 14; ix. 35.)

The whole story seems more natural and complete, if thus we are first told what "*one* of the two which heard John speak and followed" Jesus, afterwards did, and then, what the *other* one did.

We cannot be sure of this, for God's Word has not told us plainly. But anyhow, whoever this Philip was, and whether or not he had already met Jesus or heard of Him, Jesus had won his heart now, and he was ready to follow Him anywhere.

(V. 45.) He had no doubt in his own mind, who Jesus was, had he? But could he not keep the good news to himself? Perhaps, being the sort of man he was, he tried to do so—like Jeremiah, (Jer. xx. 9,) and found he "could not." It was like "a burning fire shut up" in his bones, and he "could not" stifle the flame.

And so Jesus "findeth Philip," and then "Philip findeth"—whom does he find? (Nathanael.) "Thus it spreads—the knowledge of Jesus!"

We read afterwards of "Philip and Bar-

tholomew," (Matt. x. 3,) side by side, as if they belonged to each other: and many people think that Bartholomew—one of the twelve apostles—was this "Nathanael."

(V. 46.) Did he seem disposed to believe Philip, at first? No; he seems to have thought Philip had become an "enthusiast," and forgotten common sense and reason! His words remind us of what Festus said to St. Paul: "Paul, thou art beside thyself!"—"mad!" (Acts xxvi. 24.) For what does Nathanael say to Philip? "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Nazareth of Galilee?" That poor little place? Never so much as named in Old Testament prophecies! (See ch. vii. 41, 42, 52.) Was it likely?

Nathanael did not know that Jesus was not *born* in Nazareth, ("where He had been brought up," Luke iv. 16,) but "in Bethlehem of Judæa," as the Prophet had foretold. (Matt. ii. 1—6.) And so he thought he was saying a wise thing, when he was really saying a foolish thing, in arguing:

“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

Most likely, Philip was as ignorant as Nathanael about this, so he could not argue with him. But does he lose heart, and give it up? How does he get over the difficulty?—what does he say? It was better than any arguments; “Come and see!” That is—I cannot argue with you—I am not clever enough—I cannot convince you by any words of mine: but one sight of Jesus Himself will do it. “Come and see!”

Did Nathanael “come and see?” And Who “saw Nathanael coming?” Did Jesus seem to know him at once? And did He speak kindly about him, and to him? Did He call him to account for having been so slow to believe? And yet, He seemed to have had His eye upon him, even before Philip called him! How tender! How like a mother’s tenderness! (See Is. xlii. 3.)

Nathanael doubts no longer now! Philip was right. That one sight of Jesus has convinced him: like Philip himself, he has found

a "good thing"—a "Pearl of great price,"—in Jesus of Nazareth!

Do you not think he would bless God ever after, for the day he met Philip? And how these two disciples must have loved each other, from that day! Andrew and Peter too;—close was the tie that bound them together—they were more than brothers!

The story is ended.—But does it not make us wish that the story of our own lives may be like it? Would it not be worth *anything*, to be allowed to bring souls to Jesus, as Andrew and Philip did? "Delightful hope!" said a dying man who had just "found Him," and who was told that this joy might yet be within his reach.*

Do you feel a longing for it? Thank God for that longing! He gave it; and He can fulfil it.

If you do not feel it, pray God that you may. Think of James v. 20! And of Dan. xii. 3!

If you are the means of saving "a soul

* "The Victory Won." *Nisbet & Co.*

from death," even *one*—and yet why not be among those who "turn *many* to righteousness?"—you live to some purpose, and angels rejoice, and God is glorified.

And remember this: the soul you bring to Jesus may far outstrip you in the Christian Race. Many children grow up taller than their parents. "The sons of Zebedee" were greater men than Zebedee. Peter became a greater man than Andrew, who had "brought him to Jesus!"

Well now, if you do long to bring souls to Jesus, let this story show you the way. It will give you three waymarks.

(1) "He first findeth his own brother!"

Begin at the right end. "Charity begins at home." It is not the easiest end, I know. And God knows that! Do not dream over other people's opportunities, but use your own. "Take the duty that lies nearest to you." Your walk home together, to-day;—your work with others, to-morrow;—your next letter home, - if you are away; &c.

"Occupy!" A talent used is a talent gained. Use what you have, and more "shall be given." (Luke xix. 13—26.) Go home to your "own brother," and let him see that you "have found" something worth having, and that you want him to have it too. Begin at home; though you need not, and must not, end there. We must not wait till everybody in our own homes, or in our own country, has been brought to Jesus, or we should disobey other commands in God's Word; but we must care "first" for our "own brothers!" (Read Mark v. 19.) "Until the Day dawn" when "they shall all know Me, . . . saith the Lord," (Jer. xxxi. 34,) we must "teach," "every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying: Know the LORD!"

(2) "He brought him to—JESUS!"

You want to do some one good. Remember, to start with, that—you cannot! Then, that Jesus can!

"None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

All the good that any soul can ever do to another, is to bring that soul into contact with "Jesus Himself:" and, that done, to bring it into still closer contact with Him. If you want to do good, you must "minister much of *Him* to others." You must seek to win people over—not to yourself, or your Church, or your Minister, or your "Teacher," but—to "Jesus Himself." All else is valuable, just so far as it leads to Him. Why is it that you should try to bring others to hear of Jesus, here or elsewhere? Because God may bless it, by leading them to "Jesus Himself."

(3) "We have found!"

Andrew said it, and so did Philip. You must be able to say it, also. You must get the reality yourself. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at Peace"—"with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" (Job xxii. 21. Rom. v. 1;) and then you will have "a heart at leisure from itself," to acquaint other people with Him. Andrew "*brought*"—not sent—his brother to Jesus. Philip

said to Nathanael: "*Come* and see;" not, *Go* and see.

You must have *something to tell*, when you "go home" to your friends, to make them see what Jesus is, and what He can do. (Ps. lxvi. 16.)

Begin by listening to the voice of Jesus in your own souls. Listen!—listen now! For it is He Who first says—what we say to one another: "Come and see!"

And then, "go home to thy friends," and repeat to them what you have heard from "Jesus Himself." You will meet "many that say, Who will show us any good?" (Ps. iv. 6.) And you will have an answer ready: "COME AND SEE!"



LESSON VII.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—AT A WEDDING FEAST.

St. John ii. 1—11.

THIS was "in Cana of Galilee." Nathanael's native place! (Ch. xxi. 2.) What a pleasure for Nathanael, to see Jesus there!

It was "the third day"—of the three we have been thinking of. On the first, (ch. i. 35,) Andrew and the other disciple became followers of Jesus; and Simon Peter too, brought by—? (Andrew.) On the second, Philip—who, as we saw last Sunday, was very likely one of the two who had followed Jesus the day before—brings Nathanael: and Nathanael is convinced that Jesus is "Son of God" and "King of Israel."

From this time, Nathanael (or Bartholomew) seems to have become a real disciple

of Jesus. (See ch. xxi. 2, again.) And now, the first journey he takes with his new Master is to his own city, Cana of Galilee!

Jesus "and His disciples" were invited to this Wedding Feast; and they must all have liked to go with Him; but I think Nathanael must have enjoyed the day more than any of them. Cana was his own home; and it is sweet to have Jesus at home with us!

If any of you first learned to know Jesus when away from home, are you longing to bring Him home with you? Do you long to see Jesus a welcome guest there? Do you go home and say:—

"I have a Friend, a precious Friend,
Unfailing, kind, and true,
The Chief among ten thousand!
Oh! I wish you knew Him too!"

Or—are you "ashamed" of your new Friend? (Mark viii. 38.)

Let us follow Jesus now, to Cana of Galilee. Andrew, and Peter, and Philip, and Nathanael, are following Him; let us come too.

He has reached Cana: He seems to know His way—or Nathanael guides Him to the house He wants—for He stops at a certain door. He seems to be expected there; and His followers are made welcome too. What is going on? A feast is being prepared, One man, called the “Governor,” or “Ruler,” of the feast, is busy making arrangements; the servants are busy too, and the company will all be assembled soon. We see among them one whom we know;—one whom Jesus knows and loves. Who is that? (“The Mother of Jesus.”) It seems some happy occasion—what is it? “A Marriage.”

So here we find Jesus—in “the house of feasting!” The “Man of Sorrows,” in a scene of joy! He is come—not to damp the pleasure, but (as we shall see) to increase it. How unselfish! Do you think it is easy to enter into other people’s pleasures, when you are expecting some great trial yourself? And Jesus had Calvary before Him—always before Him—plainly before Him! If you and I mean to follow His steps, we must

“rejoice with them that do rejoice,” and not only “weep with them that weep.” (Rom. xii. 15.)

Jesus had been “called,” *i. e.*, invited, to this wedding. Is He always welcome in scenes of joy? People seem to think He would spoil their pleasures! How little they know Him! He spoils no pleasures but “the pleasures of sin.” Turn to Rev. iii. 20. Does this sound like coming in, to spoil our pleasures?

It is keeping Christ out, not letting Christ in, that makes people unhappy. When we know He is standing at the door, and we hear Him “knock,” and yet dare not open the door to let Him “come in,” though, on the other hand, we dare not stop our ears, or say, “Depart from us!”—then it is that we get restless and unhappy. Jesus is too near, and yet not near enough; too near to let us be happy without Him, and yet not near enough to make us happy.

Thousands are in this state. Some of *you* may be among them. If you were in

affliction, you would want Jesus directly; but so long as life goes on smoothly, you think you can get on as well—or better—without Him! In the house of mourning you would welcome Him; but you are afraid of inviting Him to the feast! (Is. xxvi. 16.)

Come then, and watch Jesus at this Marriage Feast; and decide the question by what you see there! Come and see whether the Presence of Jesus “adorned and beautified” that scene of joy, or cast a gloom over it!

(V. 2.) Jesus had been invited; and who had been invited with Him? (His disciples.) With Him, they might go safely anywhere. And so may you! Do you want a rule to guide you in accepting invitations? If you can take Jesus with you, go; if not, stay away. If you can ask Him beforehand to go with you, and can enjoy His Presence when there, and tell Him all about it when you come home—then go without fear. If not, stay at home; with Him! (Ex. xxxiii. 14, 15.)

(V. 3.) "They wanted wine." To judge by the company—a carpenter's wife and her Son, and some friends of His—all working men,—were they rich people, or poor? Was Jesus Himself a rich man? (2 Cor. viii. 9.) No; "He became poor;" and His friends were poor. Remember this, all through the story: it was in a poor man's house that Jesus did His first miracle, "and manifested forth His glory."

But who needs Him here? For once, the table is well supplied, in that poor man's house: and none are sick or sorrowful in the company.

Before long, however, something is "wanted." The little stock of wine they could afford is all gone: "they wanted wine!"

Only wine? Was it worth while for Jesus to supply so small a want? The people were poor, and could not send out for more wine, so it was a real want; but was it not too small for Jesus to care about?

If ever you are tempted to think your

wants are too small for Him to care about, open your Bible, and find out the second chapter of St. John's Gospel, and try to read this third verse as if you had never read it before. "They wanted wine"—only wine, at a Marriage Feast! And this was chosen by Jesus as the best opportunity for the "beginning of miracles!" (V. 11.)

It is our own fault, if we see but little of "His glory" in the common things of life "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," because man so seldom looks out for God till he is in extremity. Trace this throughout Ps. cvii. Especially notice vv. 6, 13, 19, 28, 43.

When "they wanted wine," did Mary think it worth naming to Jesus? She, at least, knew Him well enough for that. She saw how matters stood, and something more than woman's instinct told her that Jesus could set it all right. She felt sure He could do it, though she did not know how. She knew that her Son was "the Son of God." (See Luke i. 35.)

When you get into difficulties, do not waste your time in puzzling over them by yourself; and do not wait till you see *how* the help is to come, before you ask for it;— (many people do this!—) but go straight to Jesus, and lay the case before Him. Mary did not say: Make water into wine; she simply said: “They have no wine.” He knows where to lay His hand on any blessing you want, without any directions from you! (See John vi. 5, 6. Gen. xxi. 15, 16, 19. Numb. xi. 13, 21—23, 31.)

Only tell, and trust! Always tell Him! Always trust Him! “Commit thy way unto the Lord; *trust also* in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.” (Ps. xxxvii. 5.)

And when the blessing comes, you will see this difference between God’s thoughts and your thoughts—your ways and His ways; that the most you had hoped for was a small blessing by some great means, and God has given a great blessing by small means. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so”—&c. (Is. lv. 8, 9.)

(V. 4.) I said, we must "tell" Jesus, and "trust" Him. Mary had to do both. For Jesus did not tell her His thoughts and plans. What did He say to her? It seemed almost as if she had been too bold—though the word He uses—"Woman"—was a respectful way of speaking, in that country.

But often, it is not so much the actual words, as the way in which they are spoken, that tell us what people mean. And it is plain that Jesus' words did not crush Mary's hopes. She herself had meant more than she had said, in the words: "They have no wine;" *i. e.*, she expected Him to supply it. This we see by His answer. It is an answer to her thought, rather than to her words. He means more than He says. His words are few, but she knows the heart of love behind them. "Mine hour is not yet come." But when you say, "Not yet," what do you mean? Are you going to do the thing, or not? So the very words that seemed to check her, gave her fresh hope. We see this, by what follows.

(V. 5.) What does she do next? She feels sure the blessing is coming! No fear as to whether Jesus will give! the only fear is—whether they can receive it. (See Ps. lxxxi. 10. Mal. iii. 10.)

At a Prayer-Meeting once assembled to ask God to send much-needed rain, one child appeared, bringing—a large umbrella! She expected the blessing, and wanted to be prepared! (See Philem. 22.)

Mary is bent on one thing now; preparing for the blessing; getting all hindrances out of the way. Suppose the end of the story had been this: Jesus could not do any mighty work there, because of their disobedience! Would it not have been a pity? (See Matt. xiii. 58. Mark vi. 5, 6.)

When we are expecting answers to prayer, let us take care lest we stop them on their way, by our sin. "Tell!" "Trust!" And—one thing more—*obey!* "Whatsoever He saith unto you"—small or great—"do it." "Ye shall eat of the good of the land;" on one condition; "if ye be willing and

obedient." (Is. i. 19. See Josh. vii. 12, 13.) "Trust in the Lord, and"—what else? "*Do good!*" "And verily thou shalt be fed." (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) It is of no use to "lean upon the Lord, and say, . . . None evil can come upon us," unless we do what He tells us to do. (Micah iii. 11. Jer. vi. 14, 16—19; vii. 3—7, 13—15; xxiii. 16, 17; xliv. 4—6. Matt. vii. 26, 27.)

"*Do it!*" A short word! but it is the key to many a hard lock. (John vii. 17. Ps. cxix. 100; cxi. 10.)

"*Do it!*" "*Whatsoever*" it be! Bind that long word and that short word fast together. "*Do it!*" Not,—intend it, admire it in other people, dream about it, talk about it, but—"do it!" (Deut. xii. 32; xxvi. 16; xxix. 29.) "*Do*" it,—“and the God of Peace shall be with you.” (Phil. iv. 9.) *Do it*,—and “happy are ye!” (John xiii. 17; xiv. 21.) *Do it*, and the answers to prayer, that have been stopped on their way, shall come down in showers! (Ps. lxvi. 18, 19. 1 John iii. 21, 22. Mal. iii. 10.)

(V. 6.) Now watch the blessing ; for His hour has come. All is ready : we have—

- (1) A present Saviour.
- (2) A want felt.
- (3) A want told.
- (4) A faith alive.
- (5) A practical obedience.

All is ready ; “the windows of heaven” are open ; and He begins His work.

In a strange way ! “Six waterpots” that had been used—“after the manner of the purifying of the Jews”—to wash before eating, and then had been put on one side,—these are to be brought into use !

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.”

He delights in using what seems useless !
(2 Kings vii. 3, &c. Is. xxxiii. 23 ; last clause.)

Do *you* feel useless ? Tell Jesus ; trust Him ; obey Him ; and He will use you. His strength shall be “made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor. iv. 7 ; xii. 9. Acts iv. 13.)

Did the servants obey? Yes, though it was a strange command. "Fill the water-pots with water!" "And they filled them;"—how far? ("Up to the brim.") If they had put in less water, would there not have been less wine? Full obedience brings full blessings. (Deut. xxviii. 1—14.)

(V. 8.) And now, we hear another command—still more strange than the last. "Draw out now, and bear unto the Governor of the Feast!"—What?—that *water* which they have just put in? How angry he will be! But this also is within the "whatsoever;" and they "draw out" what they have just put in. Nay, it is no longer water! It is—? (Wine!)

(Vv. 9, 10.) Is it "good wine?" The best wine they had tasted that day? Who said so? Without knowing where it came from? He thought the bridegroom knew, and had been keeping it back as a surprise for everybody at the end of the feast. But did the bridegroom know?

No, "but the servants—which drew the

water—knew.” They knew the history of the good wine—they knew Who had supplied—the best thing at the Feast.

One Guest—little thought of, perhaps, and, as far as we know, going away without getting any thanks or praise!—that Guest had done it. Whatever others did, “His disciples believed on Him;” they knew Who had supplied that “good wine:”—it was “Jesus Himself!”

We have watched Jesus at the Feast.

By what you have seen there, decide the question: Is it true, that He makes life gloomy?

What is the truth?

Why, that life—“without Christ,”—is, at best, (what this Marriage Feast would have been, without Him)—a “feast”—with *something wanting*—“the *best* thing” wanting! (See Hag. i. 6. Is. lxx. 13, 14; John iv. 13.)

And life—*with* Christ—what is that? A “Feast” at which you “shall never

hunger"—"never thirst!" (John vi. 35.) You may not see the supplies, beforehand: but if you see "Jesus Himself," it is enough. (Phil. iv. 19.) Jesus brought no *wine* with Him, to the Marriage in Cana of Galilee; but He brought with Him—Almighty Power and boundless Love.

Read Ps. xxxvi. 5—9! Yes; "With Thee is the FOUNTAIN of Life!"

"In vain the creature streams are dry;
We have the Fountain still!"

Till Jesus Himself shall fail, "I SHALL NOT WANT!"



Lesson VIII.

“JESUS HIMSELF”—AT JACOB’S WELL.

St. John iv. 1—26.

THE hour had not yet come for Jesus to be widely famed: and Jesus always did the right thing at the right time, and in the right way.

“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard” of His fame, (see ch. iii. 22, 23, 26,) what did He do? (“He left Judæa,” &c. V. 3.) That was like leaving the neighbourhood of London, to go into Yorkshire: Galilee was up in the north, a long way off.

Now read v. 4. Why must He “needs go through Samaria?” Because it was the direct road? Or for the sake of this poor woman of Samaria? For both reasons!

Never strain a text in order to get a lesson out of it. Watch against this; it is a common danger. Our business is to find out, first, what a verse of Scripture means, and then, what it teaches: not—what it might teach if the words meant something different!

Why then must Jesus “needs go through Samaria,” in travelling from Judæa to Galilee?—First, because it was—? (The direct road.) Just as you “must needs go through” the Midland Counties, in travelling from Middlesex to Yorkshire.

But did Jesus think of nothing but what was the best road for Himself—or did He think of somebody else, in making His plans? (See Phil. ii. 4, 5.) Somebody had need of Him on the way; and He knew it. There was a secret reason, as well as a plain reason. You see it at the end of the story. (Read vv. 39—41.) All this good, to the poor woman of Samaria and her neighbours, did not come by chance, did it? No, it was for this, that “He must needs go through

Samaria." But remember, we do not "see" this till "the end of the story."

Do not be surprised if you cannot "see" why this or that happens to you, at the time. Wait till "the end of the story," to understand it! (Ps. lxxvii. 19. Ch. xiii. 7.) But do not wait till then to believe it—*i. e.*, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. viii. 28.)

"When I stand with Christ in Glory,
Looking o'er Life's finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe."

Did you ever see a Silk Ribbon Factory? One girl sits above, and lets down a little bit of the pattern at a time, to the girl below. This second girl has nothing to do with the pattern; all she has to do is to work straight on. She will see the pattern, by and by!

Do you ever travel by railway? Do you get out at every "Junction," to make sure the Pointsman has done his work? Is that your business? Not even the engine

driver's? No, you sit still, and the engine driver goes straight on, and so you get over all the cross-lines that looked so puzzling.

And yet—that Pointsman may make a mistake, and that mistake may cause an “accident!” Will you trust God less than you trust that man? HE makes no mistakes: we need not fear to trust ourselves to HIM! (Ps. cvii. 7, 43.) “Observe these things!”—What things? Read the heading of the Psalm. (“His manifold Providence . . . in divers varieties of life.”)

“Those who watch God's Providences will never want a Providence to watch.” Trace it, where you can: and “trust, where you cannot trace.” (2 Tim. i. 12.) So shall you be kept in “perfect peace,” come what may. (Is. xxvi. 3, 4.) Observe how these two verses are linked together; and do not forget the command in v. 4, if you want to enjoy the promise in v. 3.)

(V. 5.) So now, as our Lord “must needs go through Samaria,” He comes to a city of Samaria, called—? (Sychar.)

(V. 6.) "Now Jacob's Well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied," &c. How natural it all seems! It "happens" to be mid-day, ("the sixth hour,") and very hot, therefore; and just then the dear Saviour feels to weary to go further. He was not rich, you know, (2 Cor. viii. 9,) and He always had to travel on foot. When He rode into Jerusalem "sitting upon an ass," it was the exception that proved the rule. So, as a well "happens" to be at hand, He sits down beside it, while His disciples go away into the city beyond, to buy meat: for they are hungry, and so is He. They go away, and Jesus is alone; sitting by "Jacob's Well," in case some one should come to draw water who will draw some for Him, out of charity; for He has nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.

Was Jesus really as tired and thirsty as He seemed? Yes, it was not "put on," in order to do good to this poor woman; it was all real, with Him! He was God; so He knew that she was coming, and that she

needed Him. But He was MAN ; and He sat down because He was really tired, and asked for water because He was really thirsty.

Do you remember the texts we found out lately, about Jesus being "made MAN?" (Heb. ii. 14—18, &c. See Lesson III.) And do you remember why this matters to us? (Because by this we know that He feels for us.)

How often people say, to comfort others : "I can feel for you, for I know what it is!" What do they mean?—that they know what sort of trouble we are in—*e. g.*, that we have lost a friend, or that we are in pain? No; they mean that they have passed through it themselves, and so they can understand it, and feel for us. (Ex. xxiii. 9.)

An old man once said to a young man, who was trying to comfort him in sorrow : "Ah, sir! you speak like a man who has seen a lion—in a *picture*! I have met the lion—in the wood!"

Now we all "know what it is" to be "weary"—with hand labour, or head labour,

or heart labour. "Weariness is worse than pain," sometimes. When next you feel weary, go and lean on Jesus' breast! His words in Matt. xi. 28, are to all that are "weary." See Is. l. 4. His sympathy will "refresh" you. He knows what it is to be weary!

(V. 7.) Who is coming to the well? What for? ("To draw water.") You see that, by the "waterpot" in her hand. A welcome sight to the thirsty traveller!—But, from what we learn presently, what sort of a woman was she—a woman of good character? (Vv. 17, 18.) The disciples might well be surprised to find Jesus in close conversation with her; (v. 27;) only, they had found out by this time why He drew sinners to His side. (Mark ii. 15—17.) No holy house was that, for which she was fetching water!

Was she even a kind-hearted woman? (V. 9.) Had she any idea of spiritual Truth? (V. 11.)

A hopeful case! I think we shall agree,

that if Jesus could send away such a woman, an hour or so later, believing in Him, and bent on getting others to believe in Him,—Jesus can do anything! Anything for you! And—anything by you! (Matt. xxviii. 18. Col. i. 29.)

(V. 7.) He begins very simply: He is thirsty, and so he asks for water. This is "the small end of the wedge." Look at the other end! (V. 26.)

It is a "Christ-like art," to know how to begin, in such cases. The way to learn it, is to live near Him, and observe Him closely, so as to follow Him closely, step by step. (Mark i. 17.) "Fishers of men," like other fishers, must set to work wisely, and go on with their work patiently.

(1.) Wisely. (1 Cor. ix. 19—23; x. 23, 32, 33; xi. 1. 2 Cor. xii. 16.) You must study the habits of those you want to "gain." Different "fish" need different "bait,"—different times, different ways. But one rule holds good for all:—a rule which "fishers of men" often forget: Try

know Him so little? Why, indeed? It is not His Will. (John xiv. 7—9, 21.) It grieves Him. It is our sin and our shame. (1 Cor. xv. 34.) God grant that, in this Bible-Class, we may all learn to know Jesus better!

What did He mean by the "Living Water?" (Ch. vii. 37—39.) Did she understand? (Compare ch. iii. 4; and vi. 52.) Why not? (1 Cor. ii. 14.) "Spiritual things" can only be "discerned"—*i. e.*, seen clearly—by a spiritual mind. If you were deaf, you would see my lips move, but the words would not reach your ear; you could only guess at what was said. And if your *soul* is deaf, though you catch the words, you lose the spiritual meaning. This woman caught the word "water," and thought she knew all about that! But did she? (Read vv. 11, 12.)

(V. 13.) "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?"—she had asked. Was He greater than Jacob? Why? Jacob had made this well, and a great comfort it

had been to Jacob's children ever since ;— Jesus Himself had longed for that water !— but, after all, could it take away thirst for long ? (No.)

(V. 14.) And had Jesus something better to offer ? (Yes.) Read His words.

Can anything in this world take away your soul's thirst, for long ? Do believe what you say ! Nothing that the world can give, will ever satisfy your souls. (Jer. ii. 13. Is. lv. 1, 2.) Why then waste your " money " and your " labour ? " If you will but take what He has to give, Jesus says you " shall never thirst."

" Never thirst ! " That does sound pleasant ! Do you not feel it, when you come across some one who seems to have got the real thing Jesus speaks of ?

Do you often come across such people ? Not very often, perhaps. We oftener meet those who seem to be *always* thirsting— always saying : " Who will show us any good ? " (Ps. iv. 6.)

Even in England, it sounds pleasant, (and

think how cool and refreshing it must have sounded in that hot country !) to have—not only “a cup of cold water,” but—“a well of water,” as it were, within the heart ! No earthly changes could take away that “well !” (Is. lviii. 11. Jer. xvii. 8.)

And the end was to be—? (“Everlasting Life !”)

It was enough to set her longing !

(V. 15.) At last she begins to “ask” of Him. She is on the right road now. (See v. 10.) She is very ignorant still, and she does not quite know what she is asking for, when she says : “Give me this water !” But she felt that it would be worth having ; and that Jesus could give it.

(V. 16.) Yes, He could give ; but could she receive it ?

In a moment, Jesus sends the arrow home to her heart, and makes her feel that “all things” in her sinful life, past and present, “are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom” she has “to do.” (Heb. iv. 13. Rev. ii. 23.)

(Vv. 17, 18.) Was her answer true? Yes, and Jesus does not forget to notice this, for it was the only good thing He could find to notice in her.

But *why* was it true? Oh! it was a sad story that lay behind those words of hers. Did Jesus know that story? (Yes.) And she is made to feel that He knows it.

(Vv. 19, 20.) This is getting too close and personal: and she tries to get away to some more general question. But will Jesus let her get away? No; in mercy to her soul, He gives her no rest; He brings her back to think: How is it with my own soul? Whether at Jerusalem, or on this mountain, am I a "true worshipper?" And if not, what is to become of me? (Vv. 21—24.)

(V. 25.) What is her answer? In other words: Presently!—when Messiah comes, He will tell us!

(V. 26.) No, says the Lord Jesus, not "presently," but now. Messiah is come already. If you want some one to "tell" you "all things," and undertake for you

altogether,—if you want some one whom you can trust as a Friend and a Saviour, He is not far off. You need not travel far, to seek Him. You need not wait long, to find Him. “I that speak unto thee am HE!”

And oh! it is true now;—this very day! He is “not far from every one of us.” For He has said: “Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them!” (Matt. xviii. 20.) Let us draw near to Him: for He has drawn near to us:—“LET US PRAY!”



LESSON IX.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—SATISFYING AND SATISFIED.

St. John iv. 27—42.

"THIS is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world!"

We have known this from childhood: but how came the Samaritans to know it? They heard Him themselves. (V. 42.) True: but the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, in those days; (v. 9;) who then had led these Samaritans to Jesus? What! that same woman who had grudged Him even a cup of cold water, only two days before?

If so, answer one question more: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. xviii. 14.) And use the answer, whenever you need the comfort of it, in daily life.

As many of you as are really "striving against sin," (Heb. xii. 4,) in your own hearts, and in the hearts of others, will need that comfort very often.

"To know what a man owes to the Grace of God, you must know what he was before."

We must remember "who and what manner of woman" this had been, before she met Jesus, or we shall lose half the profit of to-day's story.

And we must remember what we ourselves were "in times past!"

It is safer and wiser not to speak of those "old days" to others, unless their need require it. In this case, we should keep back nothing that may be profitable to them. (See 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. Gal. i. 13—24. 1 Tim. i. 13—16.) The confession of our own past and pardoned sins, may, at times, help a fellow-sinner, when tempted to despair, more than anything we could say. We must not be silent at such a time. But we must "watch and pray," lest Satan tempt us to glory in our shame.

We ourselves, however, must remember those "old days," and God's Patience with us.

Of course, we are not to be for ever thinking about the Past. In one sense, we are to forget "those things which are behind;" (Phil. iii. 13;) past sins, as well as past attainments. We are to forget the Past, so far as it clogs and hinders us in "reaching forth unto those things that are before."

But we cannot afford to forget it altogether. Half an hour's study of God's Word would show us the danger of doing this.

In Canaan itself, the Israelites had need of the Passover, and of the Feast of Tabernacles. And why?

(1.) "That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt, all the days of thy life." (Deut. xvi. 3.)

(2.) That they might remember their wilderness days. (Lev. xxiii. 42, 43.)

And if "we which have believed do enter into rest," (Heb. iv. 3,) we must not forget

our days of "bondage" "in times past," and our days of weary wandering in search of "rest," afterwards.

Again and again, in the Epistles, we are reminded of what "we ourselves" were "in times past." (Eph. ii. 1—3, 11—13, 17. Eph. v. 8. Rom. vi. 17, 21. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Tit. iii. 3. 1 Pet. i. 14; ii. 10, 25.)

We need to remember it, for five reasons.

(1.) That we may love our Saviour. (Luke vii. 47; xvii. 17. John xxi. 17.)

If we forget how much we have been forgiven, we shall not love Him "much." He will have to say to us: "Thou hast left thy first love." (Rev. ii. 4.)

(2.) That we may be kept humble. (1 Cor. iv. 7; xv. 10. Rom. xi. 17—21.)

If, "by the grace of God," we now try to go about doing good, let us remember that, but for "the grace of God," we should have gone about doing harm, (see Matt. xii. 30,) to this day.

(3.) That we may earnestly try to "grow in grace." (2 Pet. i. 5—9; iii. 18.)

Do you think St. Peter himself could ever have "forgotten that he was purged from his old sins?" Could he ever have forgotten how he once denied Christ?

Would you like to be really holy, devoted Christians? Would you like to be—what others have been before you—"the glory of Christ?" (2 Cor. viii. 23.) Live with the sense of Pardon—for "old sins" as well as new—fresh upon you! Begin life again every morning as "a newly pardoned sinner!" (John viii. 11.)

(4.) That we may be hopeful and patient with others. (Rom. xv. 7. Eph. iv. 32. Col. iii. 12, 13. Matt. xviii. 32, 33.)

The voice of Jesus should be for ever sounding in our hearts: "I forgave thee all that debt!" And then, we could not easily lose heart, or hope, or patience, in dealing with others.

(5.) That we may be hopeful and patient with—ourselves! (See Deut. vii. 17—23.)

It is worse than useless to get "out of temper" with ourselves. We cannot fight,

unless we fight hopefully. (See Deut. xx. 1—4, 8. Judg. vii. 3, 9—11, 15. 1 Sam. xvii. 32—37. Eph. vi. 10—16.) And the more clearly we see our own weakness, and the strength of the enemy, the more do we need to remember that once we were “in the house of bondage,”—slaves and captives—not even fighting against Satan. If our heart fails us, as we look at one side of the mile-stone, and see how far we are from holiness, let us remember to look at the other side, and see that at least we are some miles away from the starting-point. We are not what we would be; but yet, we are not what once we were; and “He which hath begun a good work”—“begun” it, when all seemed so hopeless—“will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. i. 6, Numb. xiv. 13—19. Is. lxiii. 9—14. Ps. lxxi. 14—18; cxxxviii. 7, 8.)

Let us now come again to Jacob's Well, to see what great things Christ has done for the soul of this poor woman.

And while we look at her, let us "well remember" what once she was, that we may learn all we ought to learn from the rest of the story.

(V. 27.) When the disciples came back, they were surprised to find Him thus earnestly talking to such a woman as she seemed to be;—a Samaritan, too!—especially as He had seemed so tired when they left Him. But they knew Him well enough to guess what had been going on; so they asked no questions.

(V. 28.) The next moment, she has disappeared! She has suddenly gone away, as if she had business on hand. But see! in her haste, she has forgotten something. She has "left her waterpot." Was not that the very thing she came to fill? What will she do without it?—for now she has "nothing to draw with; and the well is deep." What can have made her forget the old want? The new joy!

Do you pity her? Is she poorer than before?

I have seen many who always seemed like thirsty people carrying their "waterpot" to a deep well; never satisfied; filling their little "waterpot" with the water of this world's pleasures; and thirsting again!

I have seen a change; those pleasures forsaken—no longer wanted or cared for. Do you think I pitied those people? No, for they had gained more than they had lost.

Do you pity a child that has outgrown his liking for a baby's rattle? Or a "grown up child" that has exchanged a doll for a book?

Do you pity that Merchant, in the Parable, who "sold all that he had," and got only "one Pearl" in exchange? Or that man who "sold all that he had," and gained only "a field" in exchange?

No: for that "one Pearl" was "of great price;" that field had "treasure hid" within it. (Matt. xiii. 44—46.) Those who were "in the secret" knew that these men were—not poorer, but—richer, than before.

Do you want to get rid of your worldly tastes?—If so,

(1.) Do not feed those worldly tastes! (Matt. vi. 19.)

Would you water a weed that you want to destroy?—Our hearts and tastes are by nature worldly. We must say “No” to them. We must keep out of temptation. We must “renounce the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same,” and keep to our promise, (made in Baptism,) that we will “not follow nor be led by them.” Let us often pray the prayer in Ps. cxix. 37. Often! for we shall often need it.

(2.) Have heavenly tastes! (Matt. vi. 20. Col. iii. 1, 2.)

The woman of Samaria did not leave her waterpot with a sigh: she simply forgot it. Her mind was full of something else.

If you saw a little child with a knife in its hand, what would you do? Rush to the child, and wrench the knife out of its hand? Or — call off its attention to something

prettier? Which would be the best way? The first might make the child grasp the knife and cut its finger; the second would make it forget the knife and let it drop.

Which of these two is God's way? (The second.) How is it that we are to overcome the world? By Faith. (1 John v. 3—5. Heb. xi. 1, 13—16, 24—27.) "The time would fail me to tell of" all the victories won "by Faith." When "the world to come" becomes real to us, this world loses its power. "Things hoped for"—"things not seen"—become more real, and more attractive, than earthly things. "Seeing Him that is invisible!" There lies the secret! The heart that is full of Jesus has no room for the world. Look often at your unseen Treasure, as the miser looks upon his hidden gold! For Love will grow by gazing on the "Altogether Lovely;" and "where your treasure is, there"—more and more entirely—"there—will your heart be also!"

And then, you will not need to talk to

other people of "the emptiness of the world." All who know you will see in you something of "the fulness of Jesus;" and the simplest words, from your own full and overflowing heart, will go to the hearts of many, and make them long to "taste" the reality for themselves.

(Vv. 28, 29.) Was it not so with the woman of Samaria? Her heart was not only full; it was overflowing. (Prov. xviii. 4. John vii. 38.) She not only forgot her old wants, but began to think of the wants of others. Like Andrew and Philip, she must needs bring others to see Jesus.

The men of the city must have been surprised to get such an invitation, from such lips as hers! But that made them all the more anxious to "see a Man" who had told her the whole story of her life, and yet attracted her, instead of making her angry.

Nothing attaches us so much to a person, as a really loving reproof; but how few know how to give it! He who could speak

to such a woman, at once faithfully and lovingly, must be no common man. Hers had been a hard heart, they knew ; and He had softened it. They would like to go and hear Him themselves.

(V. 30.) And so, her very first invitation was not given in vain. They "came unto Him."

How quickly the Master can set a new servant to work ! You yourself may have hindered others from going to Jesus, only yesterday ; and yet, if you seek and find Him to-day, you may at once be allowed to help in leading others to Him ! (See Acts ix. 20, 21. Matt. xxi. 28, 29.)

The servants, in the Parable, who were called into the vineyard at "the eleventh hour," had an hour's work to do, in the hour before them. (Matt. xx. 12.)

If a needle is rubbed along a magnet, the right way, it becomes a little magnet itself, in a few minutes. And if *you* have touched Christ by faith, you may at once draw others with you. The needle will

become a magnet. "Draw me, and we"—not I alone—"will run after Thee." (Song Sol. i. 4.)

(V. 30, again.) "They came unto Him." And when they came, were they disappointed? No, He won their hearts at once, and they wanted Him to stay with them.

(Vv. 41, 42.) He was kind enough to stay. How long? ("Two days.") At the end of those two days, when they knew Him better, were they disappointed? No, truly! The woman of Samaria had not said too much about Him. She had said too little! All she had said was: "Is not this the Christ?" But when they had heard Him themselves, they came back saying: "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world!"

Travellers have lately found out "the Sources of the Nile." The river Nile flows through "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Year after year, it overflows its banks, and the barren country becomes fruitful. For many ages, people had won-

dered whence all the water came. If the Nile could be so full, what must "the Sources of the Nile" be!

They have found it out at last! The journey was long; the dangers were many; the labour was great. But those travellers say, that when at last they sat down to rest, by the waters of that inland sea, and observed its "breadth and length and depth,"—they were not disappointed! The journey's end repaid the journey's toil.

"I had hoped, and prayed, and striven, through all kinds of difficulties,—in sickness, starvation, and fatigue,—to reach that hidden Source! . . . The glory of our prize burst suddenly upon me! There, like a sea of quicksilver, lay—far beneath—the grand expanse of water—a boundless sea horizon on the south and south-west, glittering in the noon-day sun. . . . I looked down upon those welcome waters—that vast Reservoir which nourished Egypt, and brought fertility where all was wilderness—that great Source so long hidden from mankind—that Source

of bounty and of blessings to millions of human beings!"*

In the days of Solomon, "the Queen of the South . . . came from the utmost parts of the earth" "to hear his wisdom." (Luke xi. 31.) She had heard a great deal about it, so she expected a great deal. Travelling was not easy in those days, so her journey had cost time and trouble. And yet, when she actually saw the King, and heard his wisdom, what did she say? "It was a true report;" but "behold the half was not told me!" (1 Kings x. 1—7.)

It is "a true report" that I give you, when I tell you that "Christ is all." (Col. iii. 11.) I do not fear to tell you that you will find in "Jesus Himself," all—and more than all—that you can ask or think. (Compare 1 Kings x. 13, with Phil. iv. 19.) But when you have seen Him yourselves, by faith,) you will say: "The half was not told me!"

* "The Sources of the Nile." Vol. ii. page 94.

We have seen the Sinner's joy in finding the Saviour. Let us now see the Saviour's joy in finding the Sinner.

(Return to vv. 31—34.) "In the meanwhile"—*i. e.*, while the woman "went her way into the city," forgetting her old wants in her new joy, and longing to share that joy with others, the disciples offer to Jesus the food He had so much needed. But—how strange!—He does not seem to want it, now. He seems refreshed and satisfied.

How is this? "Hath any man brought Him aught to eat?"

"No; but He has saved a sinner! He has gathered in one more soul for the Harvest! And this was the Father's "Will," and the Father's "Work." (Ps. xl. 7, 8. John iii. 17; vi. 37—40. 1 John iv. 14.)

He loved that Will! He loved that Work! To Him, it was "more than . . . necessary food." (Job xxiii. 12.) And now that He has had His heart's desire given to Him for that poor sinner, and thinks how "many of the Samaritans" she will be the means of

leading to Him, His soul is "satisfied, as with marrow and fatness." Hunger, and thirst, and weariness, are all forgotten, though He has had neither food nor rest: and the disciples may again have "remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." (John ii. 17.)

(Vv. 35—38.) His one desire now seems, to stir up His disciples to share that holy zeal—that longing love for souls. (See Luke xii. 50. Phil. i. 8; ii. 17.) He looks on the world He came to save, and it seems to Him like a great harvest-field, "white already to harvest." (Matt. ix. 36—38.) He bids His disciples reap with Him, and help Him to gather "fruit unto Life Eternal." He leads the way: He bids them follow. (Matt. xii. 30. Judg. v. 23. 1 Cor. iii. 8, 9.)

No disciple of Jesus can ever love the sinner so much as "Jesus Himself" does.

I care for your souls: and you know it. But Jesus cares more! Your Teacher's love is only the "Stream:" your Saviour's Love is the "Source."

No words of mine can tell you "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," of that Love. (Eph. iii. 14—19.) I can only pray that you may be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man," to bear the knowledge of it, and learn, through His teaching,—what you can never learn through mine alone,—“to know the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!”



LESSON X.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—"JESUS OF NAZARETH"— AT NAZARETH.

St. Luke iv. 16—29.

WELL might they wonder! For these were "gracious words!"

They said, in their surprise: "Is not this Joseph's son?" But was He really, "as was supposed, the son of Joseph?" (Luke iii. 23.) No; He had no earthly father. He was the Son of—? (God. Luke i. 35.)

Where do we find Jesus, in this story? (At Nazareth.) Had He been here before? (Matt. ii. 23. Luke ii. 39, 40, 51.) Was He born here? No: He was "born in Bethlehem of Judæa," as the prophet Micah had foretold. (Micah v. 2. John vii. 41, 42. Matt. ii. 1—6.) But Nazareth was the place "where He had been brought up." (V. 16.)

And so He was always called—not, Jesus of Bethlehem, but—? (“Jesus of Nazareth.”)

From first to last, He was known by that simple name. Even the devils knew Him by that name, as we find in this very chapter. (V. 34.) By that name, Philip called Him, when speaking of Him to Nathanael; (John i. 45;) and so did the multitudes who followed Him. (Luke xviii. 37. Matt. xxi. 10, 11.) When His enemies came to take Him prisoner, and said they were seeking for “Jesus of Nazareth,” what did Jesus Himself answer? (“I am He.” John xviii. 4—8.) And when “Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the Cross,”—“this title,”—“written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin,” and read by “many of the Jews,” was—? (“JESUS OF NAZARETH, the King of the Jews!” John xix. 19, 20.)

After His Resurrection, too, when He “drew near” to those two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and asked the subject of their conversation, Cleopas replied—? (“JESUS OF NAZARETH.” Luke xxiv. 19.)

And after His Ascension, by what name do we find Him still called—not only by His enemies, (Acts vi. 14,) but—by His own Apostles ? (JESUS OF NAZARETH." Acts ii. 22; iii. 6; iv. 10; x. 38; xxii. 8; xxvi. 9.)

When they thrust Him out of Nazareth, as we read in to-day's story, He went away to Capernaum, (vv. 30, 31,) and was often there afterwards; so that we find Capernaum spoken of as His "own city." (Matt. ix. 1; xi. 20, 23.) But He had no settled home, after He left the home of His childhood. (Lu. ix. 58.) Nazareth was the only place on earth, that Jesus could have called—"Home."

Pause with me, and let us think of the "Home" of Jesus. Do you suppose He loved it? Surely He did! Could He have been "perfect Man," and not love the place where He had enjoyed a mother's love? Could He have been "perfect Man," without feeling any attachment to a place so full of early associations? And was He not "perfect Man?" Yes; in everything except sin, He was "made like unto His brethren."

(Heb. ii. 17.) He could love one place—or person—more than another. His human heart could be touched, as ours are, by the sight of places and people that are especially beloved. He could be moved to tears at the sight of His own Jerusalem, loved and longed for, yet refusing to be saved! (Luke xix. 41, 42;)—or at the sight of friends in sorrow. (John xi. 33—35.)

He was keenly affected by things He saw and heard around Him. As Man, He could admire, what, as God, He had made. “Consider the lilies! Even Solomon . . . was not arrayed like one of these!” (Matt. vi. 28, 29.) As Man, He could love one friend above all the rest. (John xxi. 20, 24.) As Man, He could feel the treachery of Judas, just as bitterly as we ourselves should feel the treachery of a friend whom we had loved and trusted. Listen to His own sad words: “One of you which *eateth with Me* shall betray Me!” (Mark xiv. 18.) And again, in those Psalms of David by which we are allowed to see yet deeper into His human

heart of sorrow and of love: "It was not an enemy;" . . . "then, I *could have borne* it!" . . . "But it was *thou*;" . . . "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted!" (Ps. lv. 12, 13; xli. 9.)

Be sure, then, that Nazareth was "home" to "Jesus of Nazareth," as truly as Cana was "home" to "Nathanael of Cana," and Tarsus, to "Saul of Tarsus."

The home of Saul was "no mean city." (Acts xxi. 39.) But the home of Jesus was so mean a city, that Nathanael could hardly believe "any good thing" could "come out of" it. (John i. 46.) And yet, it was the home of His childhood! It was "the place where He had been brought up." And He loved it!

How many of the thirty-three years He spent on earth did He spend in that mean city, as far as we know? Thirty years! During all those years, "Jesus of Nazareth" was content to stay at Nazareth, as "the Carpenter's son;"—content to be unknown beyond His own home.

Think of "Jesus of Nazareth," then, if you are tempted to be discontented with your lot, and are wishing to be great in this world. Learn from Him to be "meek and lowly in heart:" and you will "find rest unto your souls." (Matt. xi. 29. Prov. xvi. 19. See 2 Kings iv. 13: and study Ps. cxxxi. with prayer.)

"I would not have the restless will,
Which hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
Or secret thing to know:
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go."

And think of "Jesus of Nazareth," if ever you are unkindly treated in your own home. Was Jesus kindly treated, at Nazareth? No: how does the story end? (Read vv. 28, 29.)

The Lord Jesus has now gone home—to Heaven itself. But do you think He has forgotten the day when He was cast out of His earthly "home," at Nazareth?

No; He remembers it all, as though it

had happened only yesterday:—how at first they listened, and “wondered at” those “gracious words” of His—though they only “wondered,” instead of believing the message with their hearts;—and then, when He sadly told them that He knew they would not receive Him, immediately fulfilled His words, and “rose up, and thrust Him out of the city,” and tried to take away His life. He remembers that day; and that place. The first place where He was openly “despised and rejected of men,” was—Nazareth itself, “where He had been brought up!” (Is. liii. 3. See Ps. lxix. 8.)

Who then is better able to give you sympathy, in home trials of this sort, than “Jesus of Nazareth?” If you have to bear cold looks and unkind conduct, in your own home—for no fault of yours, as far as you know,—and if your heart is sore, and you feel you could bear any thing in the world from strangers, rather than this,—go to Him for sympathy. Jesus is sure to understand; He has passed through the same

trial Himself. Go to Him, then, simply and trustingly, like a little child. Take this story, and "spread it before the Lord." Speak to Him about it—for He loves to be "put in remembrance," (Is. xliii. 26,) though He never forgets! And then, pour out your own complaint before Him, and tell Him all about it—though he knows it already. (Ps. cxlii. 2, 3.) Compare this passage of His earthly life with your own, in His realized Presence, and cast yourself on His sympathy. "Pour out thine heart like water, before the face of the Lord." (Lam. ii. 19; iii. 59. 1 Sam. i. 15, 16. 1 Pet. v. 7.)

Do this, and I will tell you what He will do, in return. He will pour out His heart of loving sympathy into yours, and you will go back to bear your cross, after Him, brave and comforted. (Ps. ix. 9, 10. John xii. 26. Matt. x. 24—39. 1 Pet. iv. 12—19.)

(V. 16.) But now let us come to the synagogue of Nazareth, and hear the "gra-

cious words" He spoke in the place He loved so well.

It is "the Sabbath day." Where do we find Him, on this day? (In the synagogue.) And yet, He had no need of any teaching He could get there; and very painful must it have been to Him to know the "secret sins"—the wandering thoughts—of all the worshippers, as He did. (John ii. 25.) If Jesus Himself did not forsake the assembly of those who met to worship God, can *we* afford to do so? (Heb. x. 25.)

No one was surprised to see Him there. Sabbath after Sabbath, they had been accustomed to have Him among them.

His place had been empty, for awhile; but that would cause no surprise. It had been Passover-time, and others as well as He had been absent, at Jerusalem.

A great deal had happened, however, since Jesus had been among them last. Any of His neighbours at Nazareth who went up to the Passover, might have seen Him drive the buyers and sellers out of the

Temple. (John ii. 13—16.) Anyhow, they must have heard of this, and of His first miracle, at Cana of Galilee, before He went up to the Passover; (John ii. 1—11;) not to speak of those other “miracles which He did,” (“not written in this book,”) which led “many” to believe in His Name, “when He was in Jerusalem.” (John ii. 23.)

The consequence of all this was, that when He came back to Nazareth, He found Himself “famous.”

He had already taught in other synagogues of Galilee; (v. 15;) and now He is to teach in the very place “where He had been brought up.” His hearers had known Him as a child; so they are eager to see and hear Him, now that He has come back to them as a “Prophet.” In our own day, we always find people interested in hearing the “first sermon” preached by a young man in his own native place.

At the usual time in the Jewish Service the “minister” of the synagogue gives Him the roll of parchment containing the pro-

phesies of Isaiah, to read the lesson for the day.

The part He chooses is what we call Isaiah lxi. 1, 2.

Find it, as Jesus did. Read it, as He did. Close it, where He did !

"He closed the book !" It seemed a little act, but it had a deep meaning.

Observe two things :—(1) What Jesus did *not* read ; and (2) What He *did* read.

I. What Jesus did *not* read.

Let us read the words that He did *not* read on that day, although they belonged to the same sentence ! ("And the Day of Vengeance of our God.") I wonder *why* "He closed the book," and left the sentence unfinished ! Can we find out, from the story itself ? What does He go on to say ? "This day is this Scripture *fulfilled* in your ears !" Now, could He have said this, if He had read those words about "the Day of Vengeance ?" Had that part of the prophecy been "fulfilled," at that day ?

No; and though there was a partial fulfilment of it to the Jews themselves, seventy years later, in the destruction of Jerusalem, (Luke xxi. 20—22,) yet “the Day of Vengeance,” in its fullest sense, has never come yet!

But is that Day sure to come at last? (2 Thess. i. 7—10. 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10.)

Why is it so long in coming? Because of “the Long-suffering of our Lord.” (2 Pet. iii. 9, 15.) St. Paul once delayed going to the Church at Corinth, because he knew that, when he came, he must punish some among them who had sinned, if he found them going on still in their sin. He waited in order to give them time to repent. (2 Cor. i. 23.) The Lord Jesus Christ is waiting now, for that same reason! He keeps His own people waiting for their joy, (Titus ii. 13,) for the sake of many who (as yet) are not His people!

“Sinners still Thy garments touching,
Stay Thee in Thy coming here.”

Shall He wait in vain, as far as *you* are

concerned? "Despisest thou the riches of His Goodness and Forbearance and Long-suffering?" (Rom. ii. 4, 5.)

II. What Jesus *did* read.

Let us read it once more. (Vv. 18, 19.) Let us try to receive it into our hearts, and take it home to ourselves. It is the Gospel of our Salvation! (Eph. i. 13.)

(1.) See the FATHER'S work, in that Salvation.

Who, did Jesus say, had "anointed" Him, and "sent" Him "to preach the Gospel to the poor?" ("The Lord God.") Yes, it was God the FATHER Who "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son," &c. (John iii. 16, 17.) Do not think of God the Father as if He wanted to punish you—as if He were your enemy, and unwilling to be reconciled! God is already reconciled to you: the only question is: Are you "reconciled to God?" (Read 2 Cor. v. 18—20. Rom. v. 8, 10; viii. 31, 32.) You do not know God, unless you know

that "God is Love." (1 John iv. 8—10, 14, 16.)

(2.) Now see the HOLY SPIRIT'S work.

Prophets, priests, and kings, were anointed with oil, when they were set apart for their office. (1 Kings xix. 16. Lev. viii. 12. 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 3, 6, 12, 13.) And "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth"—our Prophet, Priest, and King,—“with the HOLY GHOST and with power.” (Acts x. 38.)

Do you remember what sign was given to John the Baptist, by which he was to know Jesus when he saw Him? (John i. 32, 34.) That Spirit remained on Him ever after. What Jesus said at Nazareth that day, was true every day of His life: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me!"

There is more said about this, in the New Testament, than you would suppose: but we cannot go into that subject to-day. Only let us remember, before we pass on, to thank the "Loving Spirit" for His share in the great work of our salvation. Let us "praise Father, Son, and—HOLY GHOST!"

(3.) Lastly, let us see the work of "JESUS HIMSELF."

This we shall find, in the words He read in the synagogue. Read vv. 18, 19.

What a message! Sent—from the loving FATHER, through the "loving SPIRIT," by the loving "SON of the Father!" Truly, "God is Love!"

Read it once more. Is there even *one* harsh word in it? No? Then, surely, it must be meant for some very good, deserving sort of people? No! None such are named here. Let us go through the list of those to whom this "Gospel" is sent, to make the matter sure. Who are they? "The poor," "the broken-hearted," "the captives," "the blind," and "them that are bruised!" "Sure, and that's the Salvation for *me*!" said a poor Irish-woman, on hearing words like these.

What these words mean,— "poor," "broken-hearted," &c., &c.,—I need not explain to you! For you know well enough if they describe *your* case. "The heart

knoweth his own bitterness" — "his own sore" — "his own grief." (Prov. xiv. 10. 2 Chron. vi. 29.)

But if you feel that *your* picture is drawn here, then say, with that poor Irish-woman : "That's the Salvation for *me* !" If you want a "Gospel" — *i.e.*, good news, here is a Gospel for you ! The very thing you need, — Healing, Deliverance — Sight — Liberty ! — is to be had — in Jesus !

Yes, it is all to be had ; and that, *now*. For "the acceptable year of the Lord" is not yet over !

What then ? —

(1.) "To You is the Word of this Salvation sent." (Acts xiii. 26.)

(2.) "Now is the Day of Salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2.)

It is very "nigh thee" — this "great Salvation !" (Rom. x. 8.)

"Neglect" it — and how shall you "escape ?" (Heb. ii. 3.)

Accept it ! — and you shall never perish !

Lesson XI.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—THE BEST PHYSICIAN.

St. Mark i. 29—31.

THIS happened, "when they were come out of the synagogue." What synagogue?—that of Nazareth? (No; Capernaum. V. 21.).

At Nazareth—His own home—how had He been treated? (Luke iv. 28, 29.)

But here—at Capernaum—is He "despised and rejected?" No; He is treated with honour, and leaves the synagogue in peace. (Vv. 22, 27, 28.)

Where is He going now? To a house where He is sure of a welcome! Whose house is that? (V. 29.)

I wonder if Jesus is always sure of a welcome in *your heart*? Or—if it is like

that inn at Bethlehem, where there was "no room" for Him! Read Jer. xiv. 8, and turn it into prayer. Lord Jesus! "why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land?"—"Why?" Is it not our own fault? Is it not because our hearts are too full of this world?

One word of earnest warning, before I pass on. Make room for Jesus, or He will perhaps make room for Himself, by taking earthly treasures away, and leaving your heart desolate. (Jer. xiv. 10. Is. xvii. 10, 11. Lam. v. 15, 16. Hosea ii. 7.)

It is not safe—it is not wise—it is not grateful—to keep Him waiting for a welcome! (Rev. iii, 19, 20.) If you want to be safe and happy, get the answer to this prayer:

"Not a brief glance I beg,—a passing word,—
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,
Familiar, patient, condescending, free,—
Come, Friend of Sinners! thus abide with me!"

(V. 29, again.) This house, where the Lord Jesus seemed to come so naturally,

and be so welcome, was Simon Peter's home. (Luke iv. 38.)

Simon Peter was a married man. It seems to have been a united family: for we find his brother Andrew, and his wife's mother, (unless she was only on a visit,) living with him and his wife.

(V. 30.) "But"—however happy their home may have been, especially when Jesus was there, we find a shadow over it to-day. What is the reason?—There is *Sickness in the house!*

How suddenly this comes, at times! We should prize our health, and we should prize each other, more than we do, if we kept this verse in mind: "Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." (Prov. xxvii. 1.)

Do not some of us know what it is to go to a friend's house, for a common visit, and be met at the door with:—"You have not heard, then?"—"Heard?—no!—what?"—"He is very ill; not expected to recover!"—What a hush comes over our noisy, thoughtless hearts!

And in the sick room itself, what a hush

there is! When we are laid low, or our dear ones are laid low, common life seems quite strange to us. We hear the usual noises in the streets, and look out of the window, perhaps, from some other room, and wonder how people *can* hurry to and fro like that! Life outside looks so feverish! and we say in our hearts: "Surely, every man walketh in a vain show! Surely, they are disquieted in vain!" (Ps. xxxix. 6.)

"But little I heard in the Border-land
Of all that passed below:
The once loud voices of human life
To the deafened ear were low.
And oh! should they ever possess me again,
Too deeply, in heart and hand,
I must think how empty they seemed, and vain,
From the heights of the Border-Land."

And yet, the sick room may be a very happy place,—if Jesus is near! (Ps. xli. 3.) He keeps His word: "There shall no *evil* befall thee!" (Ps. xci. 10, 14—16.) If He is with us, we are sure to have "a *happy* issue out of all" our "afflictions," in one way or another. (Rom. viii. 28.)

“And pain and weakness made Him
Nearer and dearer seem,
Till Life becomes a story,
Of which He is the theme.”

Let us follow Him now to this sick room, and learn what Jesus can be, and do, in a scene like that.

“Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick, of a fever,” when Jesus came into the house. Do they hide it from Him, lest He should be afraid to stay, or not care to hear? No. What then? (“They tell Him of her.”)

I think He would have asked them what was the matter, even if they had not told Him. (See Luke xxiv. 17. John xx. 15.)

He is sure to notice it, when we look sad, or even *feel* sad; though no one else may notice it. (Ps. cxlii. 3—5. Job xxiii. 10. Hosea xiii. 5.)

And He cares to hear what makes us sad. Others may say: “How are you?”—without waiting for an answer! But when Jesus says: “Why weepest thou?”—He wants an answer. He knows “the sad tale’

Physician has done this! Who has done it?
JESUS HIMSELF!

Oh! is it not worth anything, to have
Jesus in the sick room?

He is "the Same" to-day, as yesterday.
(Heb. xiii. 8.) If only He is with you there,
you can lie down "beside the still waters,"
and "fear no evil." (Ps. xxiii. 2, 4.) If
you find yourself longing to live, or longing
too much to die, you can rest on these words
of His: "I . . . have the keys of hell and
of death." (Rev. i. 18.) And when you
leave that sick room, it will be to arise and
"minister" unto Jesus—to "serve" Him—
to "live unto" Him—whether here on
earth again, or in His own Presence—
"which is far better!" (Luke xx. 38. John
xii. 26. Rev. xxii. 3; last clause. Rom.
xiv. 7—9. 2 Cor. v. 6—9. Phil. i. 20—24.)

We have seen what Jesus can do, for soul
and body, in the time of sickness.

But it is not in bodily sickness only, that
we need "the best Physician." We are

all like sick people, because we are all—? (“Sinners.” Matt. ix. 11, 12.)

And can “none but Jesus” cure us of this disease? (Matt. i. 21. Acts iv. 12.)

Then, when we feel our sins heavy upon us, let us “tell Him” about our own case. He has cured many already, who were once as bad as we can be. He has many such in Heaven with Him now. (1 Cor. vi. 11. Eph. ii. 1—7.) “Jesus Christ maketh *thee* whole.” (Acts ix. 34.)

And suppose you see others in danger;—“sick unto death” in their sinful souls! What is to be done? Can you cure them yourself? No? but Jesus can. And you can do something towards it! “Tell Him” of them.

Bring the case to HIM—not as to a Judge, that He may condemn, (see John viii. 3—11,) but as to a Physician, that He may heal. (See Matt. viii. 5—7; ix. 2; xvii. 14—17. James v. 16.) It may save a soul from death! (See Rom. vi. 21. Jer. xxx. 13. Ezek. xxii. 30, 31. 1 John v. 16.)

Remember this: Sin is a very dangerous

thing. "I am horribly afraid for the ungodly that forsake Thy Law." (Ps. cxix. 53. Pr. Book version.) And "I am horribly afraid for" the godly too, that "grieve the Holy Spirit of God." (Eph. iv. 30. Is. lxiii. 10.) Sin *must* bring sorrow : here, or hereafter. (Deut. xxxii. 19, 20. Lam. iv. 6. Amos iii. 2, 3. Ps. lxxxix. 30—32. Numb. xxxii. 23.)

Learn then, from this story, how to deal with the sins of others.

(I.) Do not tell your neighbour—if you can possibly help it;—but—"tell" JESUS. Make it a habit.

Is this often done ? I fear not !

Stories—perhaps true, or very likely *not* true—of others' sins, are repeated to other sinners, for love of gossip, or to exalt Self at a neighbour's expense, or even to make people laugh !

If angels could weep, they would weep over this.

For just think what Sin really is !

(1.) The sin of an ungodly man;—what is that ? A sign that "the wrath of God

cometh upon him." (Eph. v. 6.) Surely we had better go and "tell" Jesus of him, and plead for His pardon. (See Acts vii. 60.)

(2.) The sin of a godly man;—what is that? The shame of all Christians! An "occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme!" Dishonour to the holy Name of JESUS! (2 Sam. xii. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 19.) Surely we had better go and "tell" Jesus of him! (Ex. xxxii. 31, 32.) It may save him a long time of "backsliding," and of bitter sorrow afterwards. (Jer. ii. 17; iii. 21, 22.) Surely it should be with a hushed voice, and sorrowing words, that we "tell" any one else of him, if obliged to do it.

Keep the secret if you can. "Tell it not in Gath!" (2 Sam. i. 20.) There are plenty of the "saints'" sins known already! Why should you give one more "occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully?" "Tell it not,"—except to "Jesus Himself."

After that, I might almost say, tell it to others *if you can*! You will not have the heart to do it, needlessly. Prayer puts all

these things in the true light; it changes our view of sin. It turns all bitterness, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, to a tender-hearted, Christ-like sorrow. (Eph. iv. 31, 32. Jer. xiii. 17. Ps. cxix. 136, 158. Ezek. ix. 4.)

Tell Jesus always! Tell Jesus first! And if possible, tell Jesus only!

(II.) And do not let others tell you these things, unless it is a case in which it is right and necessary that you should know it.

You must not refuse to listen, in any case that concerns you, or where your advice is needed, and where you would act wrongly, or give wrong advice, if kept ignorant of the real facts.

But these cases are the exceptions to the rule. The rule is: Be "deaf" and "dumb!" (Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14.) Do not listen to stories of other people's sins.. You are not the Physician! They have come to the wrong person; (see 2 Kings v. 7;) they should have gone to Jesus, not to you. Tell them so! (Matt. xvii. 16—18.)

“Love covereth all sins.” (Prov. x. 12.) Christ’s Love has covered all *my* sins, with His own Blood! Shall I uncover the sins of others, by my tongue?

“They tell Him of her!” Go and do thou likewise! All you see in others that you long to see altered—go and “tell Him” of it. He can alter what is wrong: and He only!

Go and complain at head-quarters: not to your fellow-servants!

“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord hath done for me!”

Did the rapid cure we have read of to-day seem likely, or unlikely? Then do not keep back from telling Jesus, because the cure you want to see in others seems “unlikely.” (See Acts ix. 13—15, 21.) For Jesus Himself has said: “All power is given unto Me, in heaven and in earth.” (Matt. xxviii. 18.)

Lastly: "She arose and *ministered* unto them."

Has the Great Physician made *you* "whole?" Has He set you free from the "fever" of worldliness, and from the burden of sin?

Then go and "tell Him" of yourself! Tell Him that you thank Him heartily for all He has done, and that you want to prove your grateful love by a life of Service.

He will listen! He will love to hear you tell Him this. And if only you will "keep close to Jesus," He will guide you with His Eye, and teach you how—by "ministering" to others—to "follow His steps," day by day. (John xiii. 14—17.)

"For even the Son of Man came—not to be ministered unto, but — to minister!" (Mark x. 45.)



Lesson XII.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—IN A SOLITARY PLACE.

St. Mark i. 35—39.

THIS was "in the morning." (V. 35.) The day before had been full of work. (Vv. 21—34.) No day of His life (except the last of all) has been related to us more fully.

Part of that work, we thought of on Sunday last. This was—? (Healing "Simon's wife's mother.")

I wonder if you have ever thought of that wonderful cure, since Sunday last? I wonder if you have begun to "tell Him" of the sins (as well as sorrows) of others, instead of telling your neighbours, or hearing of these things thoughtlessly, as if they were no concern of yours, or angrily, if they have interfered with your own happiness?

If you have not really begun to "tell Him," you are not so wise as the people of Capernaum. For when they saw their neighbour well and strong again, after that dangerous illness, and heard Who it was that had cured her, what did they do? ("They brought unto Him all that were diseased." V. 32.)

"Go, and do thou likewise!" And "many" that are "sick of divers diseases," or "taken captive" by the Devil "at his will," (2 Tim. ii. 26,) shall thank you for it, in this world or the next!

(V. 35.) The night before, "all the city was gathered together at the door" of "Simon's house." (V. 33. Compare Luke iv. 38—40.) Doubtless, many of these came to see his wife's mother, on hearing of her wonderful recovery; and to see Him Who had cured her. (Compare John xii. 9.) Others came, to bring their own sick friends, and to seek the same blessing for them. Altogether, the whole place was astir with the excitement caused by this miracle, and by

the other miracle, in the synagogue, (vv. 23—27,) and by His wonderful preaching too, just before. (Vv. 21, 22.) Nobody could stay quietly at home that day. The Name of "Jesus of Nazareth" was in every-one's mouth.

But He did not care for the praise of man. (John v. 41.) This is not the only time we find Him getting away from an admiring crowd, to pray in solitude. (See Matt. xiv. 22, 23; or the same story in Mark vi. 45—47, and John vi. 14, 15. Also Luke v. 15, 16.)

We often find our Lord in the midst of a crowd: but it was to do them good, and not to get their praise. He was always at their service; for He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matt. xx. 28.) "He received them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing." (Luke ix. 11.) He stayed with them as long as He could do them any good, and then,—“withdrew Himself . . . and prayed.”

Let us now return to the story before us, and follow Jesus to the "Solitary Place" where he "prayed." I want you to notice three things: (1) The Time, (2) the Place, and (3) the Effect,—of that Prayer.

I. The TIME.

When did Jesus pray? ("In the morning; a great while before day." V. 35.)

Do you think it could have cost Him an effort, as it does in our own case—to rise up early for prayer? Surely! Was He not "made like unto His brethren?" (Heb. ii. 17.) Was He not "wearied with His journey," at Jacob's well? (John iv. 6.) And must He not have been very weary on this occasion, after working so hard the day before?

But yet, He thought it worth the effort, to get that quiet hour with God.

O His loving sympathy with any one here who is trying to get up early—if it be but five minutes earlier than daily work requires, in order to "make time" for prayer!

How sure He is to draw near to that earnest soul, and make it feel that the effort was not in vain!

But did Jesus know that this story would be read by many who work so hard—in “business,” in “service,” &c.,—during the day, that they really *cannot* rise up “a great while before day”—before the work of the day begins;—they would not have strength for it? Did He know this?

Yes, He knew! “He knew what was in man.” (John ii. 25.) And what is *not* “in man”—what human nature can *not* bear or do—He knows this also. (See Mark vi. 31; viii. 3; xiv. 38.)

To you, then,—straight to you, who lead busy lives all the week,—let me say a few words in His Name.

The Lord Jesus knows exactly how much time and strength you have. He is a kind and just Master. He will not expect of you more than you have to give; whether in time and strength, or in money. (Ps. ciii. 14. 2 Cor. viii. 12.)

If, then, you really cannot give more time to prayer than you do now, you need not be distressed about it. Let me give you two thoughts of comfort.

1. Real Prayer need not take long.

If we want to learn how to follow our Lord's example in going to the "solitary place," we cannot do better than put ourselves under His own Teaching. So let us turn to Matt. vi., and see what He Himself tells us about prayer.

The passage begins with v. 5. Is there anything in this 5th verse about the "time" needed for prayer? No; this tells us only of the "place."

V. 6 tells us more about the "place:" and also of the "effect" of prayer. We shall look at those verses presently.

Pass on to v. 7. Our Lord here warns us against—what? Using "vain repetitions;" *i.e.*, a multitude of empty words. Who, does He tell us, are in the habit of doing this? ("The heathen.") And why? Because "they think"—? ("That they shall be

heard for their much speaking)." *Their* gods are "the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear." (Deut. iv. 28.) *Their* gods do not love them, or feel for them, or understand what things they have need of. (Read 1 Kings xviii. 26—29.) *Their* god is not their "Father!"

"Be not ye like unto them," our Lord goes on to say. But why?

[Pause before you read these next words. Try to read them as if for the first time, and as in the Presence of Him, Whose words they are!]

"Be not ye therefore like unto them; for"—? ("Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him!")

This makes all the difference! If so, of course, "real prayer need not take long." The few simple words which follow must be enough to tell "our Father" what things we have need of! We need not wonder that "the Lord's Prayer" is so short!

The words most commonly used in the

Bible to express Prayer, teach us the same lesson. "Ask!" "Cry!" "Call!" "Look!" (Matt. vii. 7. Ps. lxxxvi. 3. Is. lxxv. 24. Ps. v. 3; &c., &c.) If this is "prayer," it "need not take long."

The stories of answers to prayer, in the Bible, tell us the same thing. If you look into those stories, you will find that the prayers themselves were generally very short.

When you leave your room in the morning, the question is—not, Were yours "long prayers?"—but—Can you say: "I cried with my whole heart?" (Ps. cxix. 145.) It "need not take long," to obey the command and receive the promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you." "For every one that asketh,"—really and truly "asketh,"—"receiveth;" whether his prayer last a minute or an hour! (See Neh. ii. 4—8.)

Remember those two "mites" which the door widow cast into the treasury, and what Jesus thought of them. "Many—that were rich"—had "cast in much." And yet, our

Lord said : "This poor widow hath cast in more than they all!" Yes, for it was "all that she had!" And He knew it! (Mark xii. 41—44. Luke xxi. 3, 4.)

2. You may "pray without ceasing!" (1 Thess. v. 17.)

In one sense, Prayer need not take long ; but, in another sense, it need never leave off! "Evening, and morning, and at noon" (Ps. lv. 17) are not the only times for prayer. And be sure of this, that if you really *cannot* get much time for prayer in the morning, God will make it up to you during the day.

Have you never seen a mother put up "something to eat by the way," for a child who has not had time enough for a good breakfast before starting on a journey? Your Lord will be to you like that mother, if you will but trust Him. His grace will be "sufficient" for you. He will enable you to "pray without ceasing."

The words I am going to read to you were written in a London "house of business," during the most busy time of the

year. After speaking of what her life had been "in times past," the writer said: "What a change, now, to be able to pray *all the day*, in and out of business!—to have communion with the Lord Jesus Christ!"

She is "with Christ" now! But it was in the midst of difficulties like yours, that she found time—as her consistent life proved—to "pray without ceasing."

Those that *can* do it may—and, if they want to do good and get good, they *must*—"give much time to prayer." But "long prayers" are not always real prayers, even when the "spirit is willing."

There is such a thing as "dawdling," in prayer!—and those who have plenty of time to pray, often feel the danger of this.

You are spared this temptation; and those few moments of yours may contain more real prayer, than hours of the leisurely prayers of people at leisure. It is like that "Essence of Meat," prepared for invalids, which contains more real nourishment than twice that amount of common food.

"Alas! the greater part of our time we pray without *praying*!" said a holy man on his death-bed.* We go to present our petition to the King, but we loiter on the way, and find hindrances in pressing through the outer courts: and when at last we stand before the King, we are so ashamed of our delay,—so "absent,"—so confused,—that we almost forget the petition we came to bring; and we go away saying: His Patience with me was wonderful!

Be comforted, then, you that cannot give much time to prayer. By your want of leisure, you are shielded from some temptation; and "God is able to make all grace abound towards you," to overcome the rest. (1 Cor. x. 13. 2 Cor. ix. 8.)

But—if you *can* give more time to prayer than you do now,—especially in the morning,—do it! Think over the matter, alone with God. Ask Him to show you what He thinks about it. And if He leads you to feel you *can* "make time" for more prayer,

* Adolphe Monod's "Farewell." Nisbet & Co.

then—do it! Read Ps. v. 3, and take it for your own. Special blessing follows special effort. Count the cost; but remember, for your comfort, that a kind Master counts it too.

II. The PLACE.

Where did Jesus pray? (In “a Solitary Place.”)

Are *you* always able to go to “a solitary place,” to pray? If so, it is a great help. Our Lord shews us this, by example and precept.

1. By Example.

When He wanted to pray, “He departed,” &c. Would He have done this, if He felt it made no difference? No; for He could “pray without ceasing,” better than *we* can. He never ceased to be in communion with His Father. And yet, He found there was no place for prayer like the “solitary place.”

2. By Precept.

Turn to Matt. vi. again. They are the

words of this same JESUS, Who "departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

And He is "in the midst" of us! "Speak, Lord!" Explain to us these words of Thine!

And now let us listen, while He speaks.

"Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet." What next? "Shut thy door!"

One thing seems clear; we need "a solitary place" to pray.

Now for the next Command. "When thou hast shut thy door"—what then? "Pray!" "Pray to thy Father which is in secret."

And what will be the "effect" of prayer such as this? "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." We shall look again into this, at the end of the lesson: but see, in passing, it is just what we want, is it not? Answers to prayer!

But this is—if we "pray!" And this cannot be done, it seems, unless we enter into our "closet," and shut the door!"

What shall *you* do then, you that have no

“solitary place” for prayer? Did Jesus forget how many people—who would wish to ask and receive like this—have no such “solitary place?”

No, He did *not* forget! “I know thy works, and—where thou dwellest.” (Rev. ii. 13.)

There is “a solitary place” in your own heart! A very “solitary place!” (Prov. xiv. 10. Gal. vi. 5.) God alone knows what really goes on there. Sometimes you half unlock the door, or even let some one look in—a little way—for a little time: but then, once more, the door is shut!

Use that “solitary place,” for prayer!

“The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” (Rom. viii. 26.) He can help you to pray in the “solitary place” of your own heart, wherever you may be, outwardly;—in the street, or in the work-room; in the “house of business,” as well as in the House of God! There may be crowds of people—and of cares,—outside your heart; but they can no more hinder your praying in *that* “solitary

place," than the crowds of passers-by that you see in the streets can hinder your shutting a door inside your house. The "door"—the inner door—is "shut!" "And thy Father, which seeth in secret," sees His child in "a solitary place," at prayer! You are following the steps of Him, Who "departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."

After all, the difficulty is not so much to find a "place" for prayer, as to find a heart for it. Remember:—Jesus Himself had no "solitary place" but the mountain-side! And if you had twenty solitary places that you could use, you would not find it easy. You would be afraid of others noticing that the door was "shut!" Or earthly pleasure would keep you away. Or—even what seems "work" for God!

Satan will let us go anywhere, rather than to the "solitary place," for prayer.

And even "when thou *hast* shut thy door," the work is not over. No; then it begins!—"PRAY!"

“Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

He “trembles;” but he does not despair. He will not let the saint alone *in* his closet, if he cannot keep him out of it. And therefore, prayer is hard work, as all know who really try to pray. All the powers of hell are against us! For if we do but “pray,” when we have shut the door, the victory is gained, and Satan cannot hinder our receiving the promise: “Thy Father . . . shall reward thee openly.” The enemy cannot stop the answer to prayer: so he will stop the prayer itself,—if he can. And but that “the Spirit helpeth our infirmities,” we should never pray at all, however favorable the “time” or “place.”

III. The EFFECT of that Prayer.

Why did Jesus pray? What need had He of Prayer?

We cannot understand it. He said Himself: “I do nothing of myself:” “I live by the Father,” &c. (John viii. 28; vi. 57; xiv. 10.)

But it is a deep mystery : and our best wisdom is to let it alone, and receive the simple word with a child's simplicity : Jesus "*prayed.*"

We are sometimes allowed, though, to watch the "effect" of His prayers ; and we are allowed to watch it here.

It must have been great happiness for Him, to be alone with His Father. No one else understood Him.

Yet—how trying !—that happiness is cut short ! He is disturbed, in this "solitary place." His disciples "followed after Him. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him"—? "All men seek for Thee."

(V. 38.) Now see the "effect" of that prayer. Is He angry at being disturbed ? Does prayer unfit Him for work ? No ! On the contrary, He seems quite glad to go and work again ! At once He answers : "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also : for therefore came I forth."

"And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee."

Whenever you are interrupted in prayer, think of Jesus leaving the "solitary place."

"Follow His steps:" not only in seeking that "solitary place," for prayer, but in leaving it cheerfully, at His bidding, to go and do His Will elsewhere. Let the "effect" of prayer be seen in your life;—the fulfilment of His own Promise: "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee *openly*."

You have your appointed work to do, with your hands or head. And so have I.

Will an inward life of prayer unfit us for an outward life of work? If we are "fervent in spirit," will it make us "slothful in business?" No; read the whole verse. (Rom. xii. 11.) "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord!" These two things go together, in God's Word: they must go together, in our lives.

Prayer and "work" are not two separate things; quite independent of each other, as many people seem to think. Prayer grows out of work: and work grows out of prayer.

Prayer itself is "work" — the highest work of all. And it must go *through and through* all other work, like the shuttle full of thread that goes through and through the loom, in weaving. The two threads (the warp and the woof) go in opposite directions; but they must be woven together. "Not slothful in business," *because* "fervent in spirit;" remembering that by earnestness in your daily "business," as much as by earnestness in your daily prayers, you are—"Serving the Lord."

"O Thou by Whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of Prayer Thyself hast trod;
Lord, teach us how to pray!"



Lesson XIII.

“JESUS HIMSELF”—THE SINNER’S FRIEND.

St. Luke vii. 36—50.

AND so the story ends! “GO IN PEACE!”

Are any of you saying in your heart: “O that He would speak like this to *me*!”

Why not? If you are like the poor “sinner” here spoken of, and if HE Who is “in the midst” of us is—not only *like* the Saviour here spoken of, but—that self-same Saviour, why not “go in peace” from the Bible-Class to-day?

(V. 36.) In whose house do we find our Lord now? But how came He there?—was Simon the Pharisee a friend and disciple of His? (No.) Then He had not come, to please Himself. It was not for the sake of

Simon's feast; but to do His "Father's business." (See Luke ii. 49. John iv. 34.) He had "somewhat to say unto" Simon the Pharisee; and to the woman "which was a sinner." And He did not leave the house, till He had said it.

Have any of you given yourselves up to Christ, wholly and entirely,—resolved to live *near* to God—to follow the Lord "fully," cost what it may? And are you placed in circumstances which make you ask yourselves:—Is it my duty to go into what is called "worldly society?"

If so, you need a word of warning, advice, and comfort. Let me try to give it you, from God's own Word.

Our hearts are by nature worldly. And "this infection of nature doth remain, even in them that are regenerated." It was one of the holy men of old, who said: "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." (Ps. cxix. 25.)

Our hearts are deceitful, also. (Jer. xvii. 9, 10. Is. xlv. 20. Prov. xxviii. 26.) Too often, they will not even confess their own

worldliness. They try to persuade us that we are going to this or that place of worldly amusement in order to do good, and to please God, when the truth is, we are going in order to please ourselves,—because we love “the world,” and “the things that are in the world!” (1 John ii. 15.)

But can we deceive God? (No. Gal. vi. 7. Ps. cxxxix. 1—3.) “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.” (Heb. iv. 13.)

What then? If perplexed, and afraid of trusting our own hearts, or the judgment of others, let us remember this :—

It is GOD “with Whom we have to do,”—God, in Christ,—as our “Counsellor,” and as our “Judge.”

(I.) As our “COUNSELLOR.” (Is. ix. 6.)

Do not ask His counsel, unless you intend to act upon it. (See Jer. xlii. 1—6, 20—22.) But if you *do*, ask and expect it. (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) He will not let you be deceived, if you really want to know His Will. Only be honest with God! (James i. 5—8.)

And then, He will guide you, by the "light" of His holy Word, (Ps. cxix. 105,) applied by the Holy Spirit, (1 John ii. 27. 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12,) in answer to prayer. (Ps. xxv. 4, 5, 8, 9, 12.) He will teach you how to make rules,—for your own conduct in details,—out of the great principles laid down in His Word.

"The Bible is a book of Principles; not of Rules."

Some of us take a long time to learn this. And some of us heartily wish it *were* a book of "rules," instead! It would save us all the trouble and responsibility of thinking for ourselves! (See 1 Thess. v. 21.) It would leave us free to follow the devices and desires of our own hearts, in all but outward things! We should find it so much easier to "tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs," than to do what seems expected of us as to "the Love of God!" (Luke xi. 42.) If—if only this were not "the *first* of all the Commandments," "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy

heart," &c. ! And if "the second" were not so "like unto it, namely this: Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself!" . . . (Mark xii. 29. Matt. xxii. 39. Rom. xiii. 8—10. Gal. v. 13, 14.)

Any "rule"—any number of rules, however severe—would be easier, to our narrow hearts, than this grand "principle." We would rather be "held in with bit and bridle"—obliged to obey, but not obliged to *think* or to *love*,—than live so near to God Himself, as to be guided with His "eye!" (Ps. xxxii. 9, 8.) We prefer the "yoke of bondage" to the "Law of Liberty!" (Gal. v. 1. James ii. 12.)

But when we are "in Christ," "all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17. John viii. 36.) The loving heart finds out how to please God, without needing many "rules." (1 John v. 3.)

Those who occupy lower positions in the "household," may see nothing but the "rules;" but one who lives near the Master, and is in the Master's confidence, learns to

see the principles on which those rules are formed.

"The Secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him." (Ps. xxv. 14.) The Spirit of Christ dwells in them, and makes them "of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD," (Is. xi. 2, 3,) "understanding what the Will of the Lord is." (Eph. v. 17.) They are "filled with the knowledge of His Will," (Col. i. 9,) because they are filled with the *love* of His Will. (See Ps. xl. 8.)

Love is the great interpreter of duty. Can you say: "Oh! how *love* I Thy Law! It is my meditation all the day?" If you have even *begun* to experience this, you have begun to experience this also: "The entrance of Thy Words giveth *light*; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Ps. cxix. 97, 104, 130, 165.)

Read that 119th Psalm, when you are perplexed with questions of this sort! Pray over it, till you get into its "atmosphere." It will help you wonderfully, in answering that invitation to "Simon's house!"

(II.) It is GOD "with Whom we have to do,"—as our JUDGE.

"He that is spiritual judgeth"—*i. e.*, judgeth rightly, or discerneth—"all things." (1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.) But is he himself fairly and rightly judged by other people? (No.) Finish the verse. ("He himself is judged of no man!")

Do not expect it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;"—whether in God's written Word, or in the words and lives of God's children. "They are foolishness to him." No explanations of yours can make him understand them, till the Spirit of God Himself explains them.

And therefore, the servant of Christ must expect to be misunderstood,—like his Master. (Luke vi. 22, 26. Gal. i. 10.) Read Luke vii. 31—35; and notice, that our Lord said these words just before entering Simon's house. He knew that fault-finding eyes were on Him as He entered: yet He did not turn aside. And why? Because His eye

was single; His heart set on one object—"the Will of the Father which hath sent Me." (John v. 30. Refer to the verse. Notice the word "because." Luke xi. 34, 36.)

If your eye is single, and your heart fixed, like His, and you have really asked counsel of God, and feel sure you ought to go to "Simon's house,"—then go! If you can go *as* Jesus did, you may go *where* Jesus did. If God has been your "Counsellor," you may be content that God should be your "Judge." This will enable you to bear the "contradiction of sinners;" (Heb. xii. 3;) and even the misunderstandings of saints. (See 1 Sam. i. 13.)

"Study to show thyself approved unto God." (2 Tim. ii. 15.) "Study" this, earnestly; and then it will be "a very small thing" to you, if man does not approve! "He that judgeth me is the Lord." (1 Cor. iv. 3—5.) He alone can "judge;" for He alone knows *all*.

"Let us not therefore judge one another any more;" nor be surprised or disheartened

if others make mistakes in their judgments of us.

Have you, really and truly, gone to the house of feasting "as Jesus did,"—not to please yourself, and not to please the world, but in order to do good and to please God? Then you may be sure He will teach you how to walk so as to please Him, while you are there. (Ps. xxv. 9, 12. Is. xxx. 21.)

You may not have a marked opportunity of doing good, as Jesus had in Simon's house; but you will have done good to some one, whether you know it at the time or not. (Eccl. xi. 1, 6.) Perhaps most of the good done in the world is—like the good done by little children—done unconsciously! (See Is. xlix. 4.)

(V. 37.) Let us now come to the Pharisee's house, and watch our Saviour there—watch Him lovingly and reverently, to learn what He is, and what we should be.

According to Eastern custom, they have "sat down to meat" in an open court in the centre of the house,—or in one of the

rooms, with open doors,—so that any passers by could come in and go out as they pleased. They are not sitting down as we do, with feet on the ground, but lying on couches, with their feet on the outer side.

Who needs the Saviour, here? How can He do His "Father's business," here?

Who needs Him?

Look at that woman who has just come in, among others, to see the guests! She does not watch them from a distance. She ventures near—to one of the guests—to Jesus Himself! And there she stands—"at His feet—behind Him,—weeping."

Who is that woman? ("A sinner.") Yes, but we are all "sinners," are we not? So it must mean, that she was worse than most; such as even the world would call a bad woman. She was a great sinner; she needed a great Saviour!

So, "when she heard that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house," what do we find her doing? She had heard Him spoken of as the "Friend of . . . sinners,"

(v. 34,) and that made her feel, He was just the Friend for *her*.

Have *you* got thus far? Have you begun to feel this: Jesus Christ is the Friend of "sinners;" and *I* am a "sinner;" therefore, Jesus Christ is the Friend for *me*?

In a London Hospital, some years ago, a poor Irishwoman lay dying. The "visitor" of that ward—who had never seen her before,—went to her bed-side, and repeated some of God's own Words of Promise to "sinners." Already her eyes seemed glazed in death—they had that fixed, unconscious look which we all know so well if we have watched the sick and dying; and the visitor hardly dared hope the poor woman would even *hear* God's message. But suddenly, those eyes seemed to become conscious, and the dying woman said: "You're the friend for me!"—"JESUS CHRIST is the Friend for you!" was the reply. "You are *not too far gone yet*;—not too far gone in age," (she was an elderly woman,)—"not too far gone in sickness—not too far gone in sin!"

But you have no time to lose!"—"I'm the wickedest sinner that ever was!" she murmured. "Then you are just the sinner Jesus came to save! You have no time to lose: Come to Jesus *with me!*"—and then, in words which any one but Jesus Himself might have thought *too* poor and simple, the visitor spoke to the Lord Jesus, in the name of the sufferer. The short prayer closed with this petition: "Forgive me; and let me *know* that I am forgiven!"

Almost before she had done speaking, a loud, clear voice came from the dying bed: "He *have!*" — "What do you mean?" asked the visitor, awed and startled—"He has done it?—*what we asked?*"

"YES!"—and the tone was like a cry of victory:—"He *have* done it!"

JESUS CHRIST was the Friend for her! For—she was a "sinner!"

JESUS CHRIST was the Friend for that poor woman in Simon's house, who "stood at His feet behind Him, weeping." For—she was a "sinner!"

And JESUS CHRIST is the Friend for each of *you* who feels in her heart this day that—she is a “sinner!”

As soon as this poor woman made up her mind that Jesus was the Friend for her, she comes to Him. She does not “tarry” till she is “better!” If you had met her on the way to the house, would you have advised her to wait till then? If she had, she would have “never come at all.”

“I’m not good enough to be forgiven!” was the answer received from one who had been asked to accept Christ’s Salvation. “I am not worthy, *now*,” said another; “perhaps by and by I shall be!”—Never!

“Just as I am,—poor, wretched, blind;—
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come!”

Every saved sinner will have the same story to tell, as the “sinner” of whom we are now reading. “I came to Jesus *as I was* ;” and “I obtained mercy.” (1 Tim. i. 16.)

(V. 38.) She seems very unhappy ; she is weeping. Why ? (See Ps. xxxviii. 4.)

She stands at His feet ; for she felt this was the fit place for a "sinner :"—she washes His feet ;—"with her tears !"—) she wipes His feet ;—"with the hairs of her head !"—) And then she kisses those feet, again and again ; for her love grows bolder as she sees He does not forbid her to draw near.

Last of all, she does what she meant to do first ! The tears—the floods of tears that "washed His feet"—were not prepared beforehand : she had not settled beforehand to wipe His feet with her hair—nor to kiss His feet after this. The sight of Jesus Himself had broken her heart, and made her forget, at first, what she came for !

But she remembers it at last. What had she brought with her, in that alabaster box ? (Ointment.) Ointment was much prized among the Jews. (Is. xxxix. 2. Eccl. vii. 1. Prov. xxvii. 9.) Much money was sometimes spent on it. (Matt. xxvi. 7—9.)

And so this poor woman had brought all she could bring,—the best she could offer,—to show how she loved and longed for Him. (See 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.)

It was a strange sight—that “sinner” with that Holy One!

Angels saw it, and must have rejoiced. (Luke xv. 10.)

Devils saw it, and must have gnashed their teeth. (1 Pet. v. 8.)

The proud Pharisee saw it too. And what did He say in his heart? (V. 39.) “If He were a Prophet,” He “would have known,” &c.! It never entered that proud man’s thoughts, that perhaps Jesus *did* know how bad she was, and yet allowed her to touch Him!

He little knew the Lord Jesus!

“And *you* know little of Him, if you think that He will cast you out because you are a “sinner!” On the contrary:—“This man *receiveth* sinners!” (Luke xv. 2.) Take fast hold of this. Again and again, to the end of your life, you will find it is the only

ground which you can hold against Satan :
"I am a sinner; and this Man receiveth sinners."

Did Jesus know "who and what manner of woman" this was that touched him? Did He know all about her sin, as well as Simon did? And even better? Could Simon, or the woman herself, tell Him anything about her that He did not know before? (John ii. 24, 25.)

Times will come, when this will be the greatest comfort you have;—to realize, and say to yourself: "Jesus knew what a sinner I was, before He called me to Him, though I did not know it myself. I am only learning it, little by little; I could not have believed it at first; but HE says: '*I knew* that thou wouldest deal very treacherously.'" (Is. xlviii. 8.) Lay up that text in your heart; it will be a comfort to you, some day!

(V. 40.) Jesus knew all about her. And did He know all about Simon, too? Poor Simon! He was not so good as he thought

himself. He was not so near God, after all, as the "sinner" he despised. And Jesus will tell him so.

"Simon! I have somewhat to say unto thee!" Yes, and unto *thee* also!—to each of you! Listen; for JESUS HIMSELF is speaking.

(V. 41.) "A certain creditor had two debtors." What is a creditor? And Who is meant by this "creditor?" (God.)

Who were those "two debtors?"—That "sinner" was one, of course; Simon would see that, directly. But who was the other? (Simon himself!)

There was a difference, certainly; for "one owed five hundred pence; and the other"—? (Only "fifty.")

But they were alike in three things:—

- (1.) They were "debtors."
- (2.) "They had nothing to pay."
- (3.) "He frankly forgave them—both."

"Tell me therefore;—which of them will love Him most?" ("He, to whom He for-

gave most." V. 43.) So Simon thought also; and Jesus answered—? ("Thou hast rightly judged.")

(V. 44.) And now the Saviour brings the message home to each heart.

"He turned *to* the woman"—from whom all others turned away!

[A poor "lost" sinner, who had been hardened against all God's messages till then, has been known—by the writer—to break down, conquered by His Love at last, on hearing this.]

"He turned *to* the woman"—while He spoke to Simon. "Seest thou this woman?"

Had Simon seen her? (Yes.) And thought he knew all about her, much better than Jesus did! He had been looking at her, with scorn: "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou!" (Is. lxxv. 5.)

Jesus had been looking at her too; but with eyes of loving pity. "Come unto Me—wearied and heavy laden—and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.)

Such had been Simon's thoughts,—and Jesus' thoughts,—about the woman.

Now see what had been Simon's thoughts, and the woman's thoughts,—about Jesus.

We shall see, by their different ways of treating Him. How does Jesus. Himself speak of it? (Vv. 44—46.) The Pharisee's thought was: He is no "Prophet!"—worthy of no honour. Hers was: He is a Saviour—*my* Saviour;—and I love Him—much!

Lastly, see what were JESUS' thoughts, about Simon, and about the woman.

(a.) About Simon! It is a dark, dark blank! But when you read what "He said to the woman," remember, this is what He did *not* say to Simon!

(b.) About the woman. They were "thoughts of peace;" (Jer. xxix. 11;) and He said them aloud in her hearing.

First, He spoke to Simon: (and oh! how fearful to hear only of *another's* forgiveness!)—"I say unto thee, *Her* sins—which

are many," (for she had owed the "five hundred talents,")—"are forgiven!"

"She loved much!" And well she might! He had forgiven her "all THAT debt!" (See Is. i. 18; xlv. 22.)

And then—(the best of all comes last!—) He speaks straight to *her*. He said *unto her*: "Thy sins are forgiven! Thy faith hath saved thee: go in Peace."

I leave you with two questions.

1. "WHO IS THIS THAT FORGIVETH SINS?"
(Answer me; from Heb. xiii. 8.)

2. "WHICH OF US SHALL LOVE HIM MOST?"



Lesson XIV.

“JESUS HIMSELF”—STILLING THE STORM.

St. Mark iv. 35—41.

“WHAT manner of man is this?” It is
“GOD WITH US :”—GOD, “in the likeness of
men!” (Matt. i. 23. Phil. ii. 7.)

“What manner of man is this?” Just
what you want, for a Friend and a Saviour;
as we shall see presently.

(V. 35.) At what time of day does the
story begin? (“When the even was come.”)

(Vv. 1, 33.) Where had He spent the day?
And how?

All day long, He seems to have been
teaching the people, “as they were able to
hear it.” Many a parable had He spoken
that day! And even when He was “alone”
with His disciples, was the work over?
(Vv. 10, 11, 34.)

Evening has come, at last. Surely He can rest now? No! He wishes to "pass over unto the other side" of the lake!

Can you guess *why*? Read vv. 1, 2, of the next chapter, and then tell me why He could not stay and rest where He was, that evening!—He was wanted on "the other side!" And he knew it!

He did not stay long. (Ch. V. 21.) But He stayed long enough to do the work He had gone there to do.

Wherever Jesus went, He left "foot-prints" behind Him—as *we* do, when we walk in the snow. He had always done good to somebody, before He left the place. See a striking instance of this in Mark vi. 5. Even there,—where He "could do no mighty work," because of their unbelief,—we read: "save that He laid His hands on a *few* sick folk, and healed them." As if He could not help it! So overflowing His compassion! (See also Luke xix. 1, 9, 10.)

Wherever He went, He had this object distinctly before Him. (See Acts x. 38.)

Have you not sometimes met servants of Christ who remind you of their Master in this? Wherever they want to go, you feel sure they have got some plan in their heads for "doing good." You may not understand it; or, if you do, you may not sympathize; but at least you feel certain what their motive is, when they say: "Let us pass over unto the other side."

Would you not like to go about "doing good?" Then pray for the Spirit of Christ. (Rom. viii. 9; xv. 1—3. 1 John ii. 6. Matt. xi. 29.) Watch against a restless spirit—a desire of changing your place just for the sake of changing. It is a great danger, in these days. "Wait on the Lord;" and "walk after the Lord." (Ps. xxvii. 14. Hosea xii. 6; xi. 10. Ex. xxxiii. 15. Numb. ix. 22, 23. Is. lv. 4.)

You must not expect to see clearly, beforehand, as Christ could, the good works prepared for you; nor to have "visions," like St. Paul. (Acts xvi. 9, 10.) You may make mistakes; both in your plans for doing

good, and in your way of carrying out those plans. But you serve a kind Master; and He will make allowances for your want of wisdom, if only your motive be honest. Do not bury your talent in the earth, for fear of making mistakes in using it! (Matt. xxv. 24—28.) Try—at least *try*—to follow His steps; and you will find “good works” prepared for you to “walk in,” wherever you go. (Eph. ii. 10; see margin.)

(V. 36.) So, “when they had sent away the multitude,” the disciples did as their Master wished, (though most likely they did not know why He wished it,) and “took Him—even as He was—in the ship.”

“Even as He was!” Very weary He must have been!—Are you glad to think He is never weary now?

Was their little ship the only one on the lake? (No; “there were also with Him other little ships.”) On lakes of this kind, storms come suddenly, but often keep within narrow bounds. The “great storm” and the “great calm” must have been seen

from those "other little ships," though they may not have been in so much danger.

Have you ever been near a child of God all through some great trial, and watched him closely? Then you have seen what God can do for His tried children. (See Dan. iii. 24—27; vi. 19—23.) You have had a great privilege! Use it well: for every privilege must do us good or harm.

(V. 37.) Had Jesus told His people to get into the ship? And was He there Himself? Then, of course, they would safely "pass over unto the other side."

But—did Christ's presence prevent their having a storm on the way? No! A storm arose; and it was "a great storm!" The waves beat into the little ship, till it was "filled with water"—"covered with the waves," (Luke viii. 23. Matt. viii. 24,) "and they were in jeopardy," *i. e.*, in danger.

In danger! At least, so it seemed. And yet, Christ was on board!

So it is now.—Is not Christ with His

people, and in them, still? (Matt. xxviii. 20. John xiv. 23; xv. 4; xvii. 23. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.)

Is it not true that so long as they abide in Him, however weak and helpless, they can "never perish"? (John x. 29.)

But will Christ's presence prevent their having "storms"—of trouble—on the way? You answer at once: No!

Remember that answer, when you meet those "storms." "Think it not strange!" (1 Pet. iv. 12.) St. Peter had to remind Christians of this, in his day; and we need reminding of it still. We forget the prayer offered for us at our Baptism;—that we might—not, escape—but—"so *pass* the waves of this troublesome world," &c.

"Christ has promised a safe landing; but He has not promised a smooth passage." We must expect to meet "storms" on the way.

What sort of storms?

I. The common troubles of life.

Do such things, *i. e.*, sickness, the loss of friends, earthly losses of all kinds—happen

to Christ's people, only? Or to "the children of this world," only? No; they are "common to man." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

If there is any difference, who have the larger share of these trials? (Christ's people. Heb. xii. 1—8. Ps. xxxvii. Ps. lxxiii.)

"Beloved, think it not strange," if you do not escape. Storms will come, *though* you "belong to Christ."

II. The storm of Persecution.

This storm will come, *because* you "belong to Christ."

Read 2 Timothy iii. 12. Look into it carefully, word by word. "ALL that WILL LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS SHALL SUFFER PERSECUTION!" Does this mean what it says? Then, if *you* "will live godly in Christ Jesus," what must *you* expect? ("Persecution.")

Of course, if you are "of the world"—if you make up your mind to please the world at any rate, and then please God *besides*, if you can,—the world will "love his own." (John xv. 19.) In these days, it is quite

possible not to go far *enough*, in religion, to please the world! The more "religious" you are, in certain ways, the more the world will love you!

But—once make up your mind—determine—"WILL"—for this is what the word means in the original—to "LIVE GODLY IN CHRIST JESUS," and—if God's Word is true—the world will love you less. (2 Cor. vi. 14. Gal. iv. 29.) You must not expect to be so "popular" as before. If you go far enough to please God, you will be "going too far" to please the world. And, sooner or later, in one way or another, you will learn what "persecution" means.

It is not likely to come to you, just in the same way as to the martyrs of old; but there are other ways. (See Prov. xii. 18.) David was a man of war, and he knew that a "sharp sword," &c., was no child's play-thing, when he spoke of those whose "tongues" were like a "sharp sword," and whose "bitter words" were like "arrows." (Ps. cxl. 3; lvii. 3, 4; lxiv. 3.)

If you "*will* live godly in Christ Jesus," expect that "sharp sword," and those poisoned "arrows;" not only from strangers, (this would be easy to bear!)—but even from those who really love you at heart. It is not *you*, but the unworldly "CHRIST in you," that they persecute with those "swords and arrows." (John xvii. 14.)

The storm has fallen upon you *because* you "belong to Christ." You can look up to Him, and say: "O Lord, Thou knowest" why this storm fell upon me! I could have escaped it all! "Know, that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke!" (Jer. xv. 15. Ps. lxi. 7—9.)

You see, we must expect—what the disciples had—STORMS BY THE WAY.

Now let us return to the story, and see what it is to have CHRIST'S PRESENCE IN THE STORM!

(Vv. 38—40.) When the storm first arose, did He arise and rebuke it? What was He doing? (He was "asleep!")

The only time that the Gospel Stories

show us the sleeping Saviour, is in that "great storm!" A strange time for sleeping! The only time when we read of His disciples being in danger!

Was He really asleep? Yes. Everything was *real*, with HIM! How tired He must have been with that long day's work, though He loved to do it! The storm could not wake Him. Even the waves dashing into the boat could not wake Him!

What *did* wake Him? His disciples' first cry for help!—And has He not heard *your* cry for help? (Is. lxx. 24. Ps. l. 15.)

(V. 38.) What do they say? ("Master, carest Thou not that we perish?") Can you answer that question? *Did* He care? Was it likely they should "perish," with the Master on board?—Likely, that HE should be drowned? (A worse Death than drowning was before Him!)—Or, that He would save Himself, and let them sink?

Disciples of Christ! You have no idea how "He careth for you!" If you had, you would have fewer cares. (1 Pet. v. 7. Luke

xii. 6, 7.) Pray that you may "know the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." (Eph. iii. 19.) What may you not believe, if you believe that He laid down His Life—in shame and agony—for you?

(V. 39.) As soon as He heard their cry, what did Jesus do? Did He rebuke them? (No.) He did rebuke them, gently, afterwards, did He not? But He "rebuked the wind," first!

Did the wind and the sea obey Him? (Yes. "The wind ceased, and there was a great calm." See Ps. xciii. 3, 4.)

(V. 40.) And in that "great calm," we hear the voice of Jesus again. He has something to say to His disciples, now. "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

If He were to ask *us* the same questions, what could we answer? "How is it,"—if we have "no faith?" (James iv. 2.)

It must be our own fault; for Jesus is the Same as ever: "Mighty to save;" "a Prince and a Saviour;" "the Mighty God ;

the Prince of Peace!" (Is. lxiii. 1. Acts v. 31. Is. ix. 6.)

Yes, HE is the Same as ever!

I. In the common troubles of life—the storms that come *though* Christ is on board.

Those who have known what it is to face those storms *without* Christ first, and afterwards *with* Christ, will tell you—it makes all the difference! We do not cease to feel; but we cease to fear. We can look Suffering in the face, according to His own loving command: "*Fear* none of those things which thou *shalt suffer!*" (Rev. ii. 10.) His Presence keeps us "in perfect peace." (Is. xxvi. 3, 4.) The winds and waves will not obey *us*; but they will obey HIM; and that is more worth knowing. We have no power ourselves: but HE has "all Power;" (Matt. xxviii. 18;) and that is better far. If a child takes the reins, we like to know that a stronger hand is really holding them, and will not give them up, even if the child should cry for them!

In this uncertain world, there is only one way to be kept "quiet from fear of evil." (Prov. i. 33. Ps. cxii. 7.)

But that one way is enough. (Job xxxiv. 29.) Every child of God will tell you the same story, in different words. If we were to stay here till we had told each other even what we have heard and seen ourselves, among God's tried people, we should have to stay here all day ! But they all give the same report. "God is faithful;" He is "a very present Help !" He gives "light" in darkness; "songs in the night." (1 Cor. x. 13. Ps. xlv. 1. Micah vii. 8. Job xxxv. 10.)

II. And in the storms of Persecution;—the storms that come *because* Christ is on board.

How did Paul and Silas feel in that dark prison at Philippi? (Acts xvi. 25. Compare Acts xiii. 50—52; v. 41.)

"Have you no scoffing from your old companions, to dash your joy?" was said to one who had lately begun to serve Christ.

"Plenty! But it does not dash it! I never knew happiness before!"*

I believe there is no time when Jesus more loves to draw near to His people, and fill them with joy, than when they are *suffering* for His sake. "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy!" (Luke vi. 22, 23. John xvi. 33. Acts v. 41. 1 Thess. i. 6.) "Shall persecution separate us from the Love of Christ?" No! it shall knit us closer than ever! (Rom. viii. 35—39.)

Tell me now, after all you have heard to-day, is it not worth while to have Christ on board? Can you be safe—or "quiet from fear of evil"—without it?

No! For you and I are out at sea; and a storm may come at any moment!

One sort of storm, indeed, you may escape by being "without Christ:"—the storm of Persecution.

But what of the others? Can you escape *them*?

No! The sea may be smooth to-day;

* "English Hearts and English Hands."

but to-morrow may bring a storm—from any quarter !

It may come without much warning !

It may come from the east, while you were expecting trouble from the west ; from the north, while you were looking out anxiously towards the south. Some difficult task, that seemed to be set before you, may be suddenly changed to the work of lying still, and suffering. Some friend you thought dying may be given back to you, and another, still dearer, may be taken from you in a moment ! Some life that seemed bound up with yours may be cut off from you ; . . . and the “little ships ” that had been sailing together may be blown far apart for the rest of the voyage !

There is nothing you can call your own, unless you have Christ. Storms will come ! And in those storms, unless we have Christ, —we may lose our *all* !

Members of the Bible-Class ! You are old enough to have known storms. Some of you have known many such already.

If you passed through the last without Christ, you have had misery enough ! Next time, let Christ be with you ; and “ your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

And—that you may be ready for that “ next time,” if it should come to-morrow,—receive the Lord Jesus into your heart to-day—this very day !

*“Then—let the wildest storms arise,
Let tempests mingle earth and skies,
No fatal shipwreck shall I fear,
But all my treasures with me bear.*

*“ If Thou, my Saviour, still art nigh,
Cheerful I live, and joyful die,
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,
To find ten thousand worlds in Thee ! ”*



Lesson XV.

**"JESUS HIMSELF"—STRONGER THAN THE
STRONG.**

St. Mark v. 1—20.

BEFORE we go further, turn to Luke xi. 21, 22. Our Lord there teaches by a parable, what here He teaches by a miracle; that He is "Stronger than the Strong."

Your heart is a "palace;" and a King lives in it. Either that "strong man armed," "the prince of this world," (John xiv. 30,) or else, "a Stronger than he," "the Prince of peace." (Is. ix. 6.)

To-day, we shall see Jesus openly casting out that "strong man" from a "palace" of his in Gadara. Watch the work closely. For unless that same work has taken place in your heart, it is the palace of Satan now!

(Vv. 1, 2.) When Jesus "was come out of the ship," He found work prepared for Him. So shall we, if we "follow His steps," wherever we go. (Eph. ii. 10; margin. See last Lesson.)

(Vv. 3—5.) Read the description of this wretched man. It shews us what Satan likes to do with soul and body, when he has his own way.

It shews us what he will do hereafter, to those who neglect Christ's great Salvation! (Heb. ii. 3.)

It shews us what He does, even now, to the *souls* of those "that are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 26.)

It shews you the real state of *your* soul, if the Devil has not yet been cast out by the Lord Jesus Christ!

If the soul could be *seen*—like the body, —Satan's "goods" would be "in peace" no longer. It is ignorance, that makes the slave of Satan content to be a slave. Thou "knowest not that thou art wretched," &c. (Rev. iii. 17.)

Read the next verse. (Rev. iii. 18.) "I counsel thee"—to remain in ignorance of thy real state? No. "I counsel thee—to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see!"

Shall we follow our Lord's "counsel?" Shall we dare to go further, and "see"—our own likeness—or the likeness of our former selves—in the poor man of Gadara?

I. (V. 3.) He "had his dwelling among the tombs."

Can this be like *you*, or, at least, like your "former self?" (See Matt. xxiii. 27. Eph. ii. 1; v. 14. 1 Tim. v. 6. Luke xv. 32. 1 John iii. 14; v. 12.) Yes; you that already "have passed from death unto life"—you know it well,—your "life," in times past, was—a living "death!"

II. (Vv. 3, 4.) "No man could bind him," or "tame" him.

And never yet was a soul brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ," by any power but that of God himself. (Ps. xlix.

7, 8.) If you are unconverted to God, and know it, do not expect your conversion from me—your earthly Teacher. It may come by me, or by any other instrument God chooses to employ; but it is “God that giveth the increase;” and the instrument is—nothing! (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. John i. 12, 13.) Let this be your prayer: Lord, do Thou Thyself convert me! And do not add, as St. Augustine used to do at one time: “But not yet!”

And if you see others around you brought to God, remember whose work it is, whatever means may have been used. “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name;” (Ps. xxix. 2;) and say, as you see His work of grace in one after another: “This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” (Is. xxviii. 29. Ps. cxv. 1. Acts iii. 12, 13, 16.)

III. (V. 5.) “He was crying, and cutting himself with stones.”

And you are like him, if Satan has his

own way with you still; you are your own enemy. No "stones" that other people throw at you can hurt you as much as those with which you cut yourself.

You think it is your "circumstances" that make you so unhappy. But it is not that! It is the sharp "stones" that the Devil puts into your own hand, and bids you use for your own hurt. There is only one way to be really happy; and you will not try it. (John v. 40.) You are kicking "against the pricks;" and you know it. "It is hard for thee!" (Acts ix. 5.) Do you observe how tenderly the Lord Jesus says it?—"Hard for *thee*!" O that it might lead you to say, as Saul of Tarsus said in that same hour: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And then, the real hindrance to your happiness will be gone. Satan has no power to ruin your soul, except by your own consent. (Matt. xxiii. 37. Is. i. 5, 6. Hosea xiii. 9.)

Such was the "man with an unclean spirit," before he met Jesus!

If you want to know whether you are like that man, do not come to *me* to tell you, but quietly think over the picture you have just seen;—and say to Him Who alone can search the heart: “Search me, O God!” (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.)

(V. 6.) “When he saw JESUS!”—This is the turning-point of the story.—When *you* meet Jesus, in your heart, that is the turning-point of *your* story!

(V. 7.) On seeing Jesus, the “legion” of devils in the man “cried with a loud voice.” Did they know who he was? Yes; and trembled before Him. (James ii. 19.) What did they say?

Observe; they knew He had power over them. For here, (in v. 7,) they beseech Him not to “torment” them. St. Matthew adds: “Before the time!” (Matt. viii. 29.) And in v. 10, you see, they ask something else. What? “That he would not send them away out of the country.” Or—as St. Luke tells us—“command them to go out into the Deep.” (Luke viii. 31.) What

does that mean?—the sea—*i.e.*, the lake, close by? No; for they rushed into this lake at once, when they had entered the swine. It means—the “Abyss.” The same word, in Rev. xx. 3, is translated “the bottomless pit.”

If ever you feel, in the hour of temptation, as if Christ, on your side, were not so strong as the Devil against you, the Devil himself knows better! He knows very well, that if you “call on the Strong for strength,”* he will have to “flee from you.” (James iv. 7. Ps. xviii. 3, 17.) That is why he will keep you from praying, if he possibly can.

“What various hindrances we meet,
In coming to the Mercy-Seat!”

And why? Because Satan “knows the worth of prayer!”

(V. 8.) Had Christ already given the word of command? What was it? “Come out of the man!” Well did the unclean spirit know, when he heard this, that he *must* “come out of the man!”

* “Pilgrim’s Progress.”

All he can hope now, is to be allowed to choose a new "palace." (Vv. 10, 12.)

(V. 13.) Was the request granted? (Yes.) It seems as if Jesus would hear even a devil's prayer, when it would do His people no harm! And yet, you sometimes doubt if He is willing to hear yours! (See Is. xxx. 19; lxxv. 24.)

We cannot tell why the devils made this request. Perhaps, because they felt sure Jesus would not let them go into any other man, and so they wanted to do all the harm they could get leave to do!

I think we can tell why Jesus granted the request. Not only, it did no harm to His people, but it taught two great lessons.

(1.) The power of Satan; and (2) the object he has in view.

(1.) Satan's Power.

(V. 9.) What name did "the unclean spirit" give himself? ("Legion.") For what reason? ("We are many.") "Legion" was a name used for a large body of Roman soldiers; generally, ten thousand in number.

But even if no exact number is meant, there must have been "many" devils in that wretched man. (Luke viii. 30.) For there were enough to fill the "whole herd of swine;" "a great herd;" "about two thousand!" (Vv. 11, 13.)

We may well tremble to think of Satan's power. For he and "his angels" are our enemies! Do we not need "the whole armour of God?" (Read Eph. vi. 11—13. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.)

We cannot afford to laugh at such an enemy. He is a "strong man, armed;" and we are very weak, and have no armour of our own.

Whenever we hear people "making jokes" about the Devil, let us show them we think it no fit subject for joking! Do you think any one would dare to make light of it, who had seen the poor man of Gadara, when he was in the Devil's power?

(2.) Satan's Object.

"Destruction and misery!" (Rom. iii. 16.) We saw it, partly, in the case of the poor

man himself; for he was "crying, and cutting himself with stones." But in the case of the swine, we see it still more plainly. "The end of those things is"—? ("Death!" Rom. vi. 21, 23.)

The Devil always has that end in view; though he does not let us see it so plainly. In this story, God lets us see it in an outward and bodily form, that we may take warning. We may not be running—"violently"—"down a steep place"—"into the sea" of destruction; but we may be loitering or gliding down—gently—along an easy path—to that same end. "There is a way which seemeth right—" &c. ! (Prov. xiv. 12.) "And many there be which go" that way ! (Matt. vii. 13.)

(V. 15.) We have seen what the Devil can do. Now let us "come," with these Gadarenes, (v. 14,) "to see" what Jesus can do.

The devil is gone out; and that poor slave is a free man.

Where do we find him now? Close to Jesus; "sitting"—as St. Luke tells us—"at the feet of Jesus." (Luke viii. 35.) He needs no "chains," to bind him there. In former days, all his "fetters and chains" had been "broken in pieces;" but now—"the cords of a man"—"the bands of love"—have bound him to the feet of Jesus! He has no wish to get away!

It is the very picture of the converted soul! Is it the very picture of *your* soul? Look at it closely, to find out; and pray God to show you the truth.

(1.) He was "sitting at the feet of Jesus."

Is this *your* place? Are your restless days over? Have you found a "resting-place?" (Jer. 50. 6.) Are you "sitting at the feet of Jesus"—content and happy—looking up at Him—clinging to Him—learning from Him? (Luke x. 39, 42. Song Sol. ii. 3; viii. 5. Matt. xi. 28, 29.)

(2.) "Clothed."

Are *you* "clothed,"—with something

better than those "filthy rags" which you once thought quite good enough? (Is. lxiv. 6; Rev. iii. 17, 18. Phil. iii. 3—9. Is. lxi. 10. Ezek. xvi. 10—14.)

(3.) "And in his right mind."

Have *you* come to your "right mind" yet? (See Luke xv. 17.) Or are you still deceived by "that old Serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world?" (Rev. xii. 9.)

Look at Acts xxvi. 22—29; it will help you to find out the truth about yourself. Which of these two men are you most like; Paul, or Festus? Do you think people "mad,"—(see Is. lix. 15; marg. reading,—) "beside themselves,"—"going too far," &c.,—when they live for "one thing," as St. Paul did? Or—have you begun to live for that "one thing" yourself? Are you, like St. Paul, "not ashamed" to confess it, before the very people who think you "mad" for so doing? Have you the faith and courage to say, gently, but firmly: "I am not mad;" these words are "the words

of truth and soberness," and "I would to God that . . . all that hear me . . . were . . . such as I am, except"—these troubles and infirmities of mine?

May God bring us—all of us—to our "right mind!"

Look once more at this changed man: "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind!" Can it be the same man who, that very morning, had been "among the tombs," so fierce and wild that "no man could bind him?"—that miserable man who, "night and day," was "crying, and cutting himself with stones?"

The neighbours who had come out "to see" with their own eyes "what it was that was done," could hardly believe their eyes, when they did "see." They began to ask those who had been eye-witnesses of the change itself, "how it befell?"

And what was the answer? Who had brought about this mighty change? *Who?* That "meek and lowly" Stranger, who had just come across the lake in that dreadful

storm, and was standing among them at that very moment? Yes; if their eyes and ears alike did not deceive them, they were in the Presence of One who was "Stronger than the Strong!"

(V. 17.) What effect had this on them? ("They began to pray Him to depart," &c.)

And what effect has it on *you*—the reading and hearing of this same story? Do you feel: "Well, there is something in this: I see, it is a real thing to be led captive by Satan—a real thing, to become 'a new creature;' but—I dislike having it 'brought home' to me like this; I do not wish to think about it—just yet;—I wish I had never heard this Lesson!—it makes Christ seem too *near* to me: I will try to forget it?"

Take warning! Jesus went away, when the Gadarenes asked Him to go away. And—as far as we know—He never returned to them!

Let Him stay! His heart is yearning over you! He wants "to bless you, in turning

away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts iii. 26.) Let Him have His own way with you, and set you free! You will not want to lose sight of Him, after that!

(V. 18.) Did "he that had been possessed with the devil" want Jesus to go away? (No.) For, as I just told you, those whom He has set free, never want Him to leave them.

Truly, this was a changed man! When Jesus had first come in sight, the evil spirit in him had cried out: "What have I to do with Thee? . . . Torment me not!" But now, when he finds Jesus is going away, what is the desire of his heart? ("That he might be—with Him!") He does not ask—for he does not care—where his Saviour is going; he makes no conditions; if only it be "with HIM," he is willing to go to the ends of the earth!

You may have felt this, as to some earthly friend. Have you felt it—do you feel it now,—as to "Jesus Himself?" Can you say, as Ruth said to Naomi: "Where thou goest,

I will go ? " Through fire and water, joy and sorrow, life and death !

" After Thee ! "—I care not whither !
 'Tis the happiest place for me ! "

Is this your heart's desire ? Then God will grant it ; for He gave it.

Was it always your heart's desire ? No ; " in times past," you saw " no beauty " in Him ; you " esteemed Him not." (Is. liii. 2, 3.) But now, you are " a new creature ; " you have new thoughts—new wishes. (2 Cor. v. 17.) You want to be " with Him ! "—always!—everywhere ! (Ps. xlii. 1.) Fear not ; your desire shall be granted. (1 John v. 14, 15.)

But—it must be in His own way ! The answer will come ; but it may come " in disguise."

This we learn from the next verse. (V. 19.) At first sight, it seems to contradict what I have been saying. (Compare v. 13 ; first clause.) At first sight, we might be inclined to say, Jesus refused the poor man's petition,

though He granted that of the devils! "Forthwith Jesus gave *them* leave;" "howbeit Jesus suffered *him* not!"

But let us look a little deeper.

If you really love any one, is it not your delight to do anything you can for him? Is there not even a sort of pleasure, in pain,—a rest, in toil and trouble, if it is for *him*? And would you not rather be trusted with some work to do for that friend, than spend your time in simply enjoying his company? If you could not do both, which would you choose:—to live "*with*" him, or to live *for* him?

Now let us read v. 19 again; not the first part only, but the last part also; and we shall see whether Jesus really "refused the poor man's petition," or granted it, "in His own way"—and that, a better way.

Why had the Gadarene wished to be "with Him?"—was it not because he loved Him? And did not Jesus know this? (Yes.) So He gave him, in reality, what He seemed to refuse,—the desire of his heart; *i. e.*, an

opportunity of proving his love to his Saviour!

For Jesus had still a work of love to do for Gadara; and He wanted a labourer to do it. The Gadarenes had wished to get rid of Him, and to forget all about Him. But He cared for them still! Although going away Himself, He wanted to leave some one with them, to tell them of His Love.

Who shall have the post of honour? Which of the disciples He brought with Him can He trust with this difficult work? Shall it be one of the favoured three,—Peter, James, or John?

O happy Gadarene! He is the “chosen vessel,” to bear the Name of JESUS to his own people! (See Acts ix. 15.)

Do you think he lost the Presence of Jesus, by obeying His command? Had not Jesus granted the real “desire” of his heart, while seeming to refuse his “petition?”

Lord Jesus! “Fulfil now,” and evermore, “the desires and petitions of Thy servants, *as may be most expedient for them!*”

(V. 20.) "He departed, and began" his work at once. (See Ps. cxix. 60.)

Go and do thou likewise. "Depart"—from sitting with me at the feet of Jesus, during this quiet hour,—“depart,” not to dream of what you might be elsewhere—if you could be listening and learning like this as often as you pleased—in a life of leisure! “Depart” for higher work than that!

“Go home”—*i. e.*, just where you are going to-day—“to thy friends” and neighbours,—in your “house of business” or elsewhere,—and—that they may see what Jesus is, and what Jesus can and will do for *them* if they ask Him—“tell them how great things the Lord hath done for *thee*, and hath had compassion on thee!”



LESSON XVI.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—CURING THE INCURABLE.

St. Mark v. 25—34.

CAN you tell me "how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil," when he had met Jesus?

And—to the woman at Jacob's Well, when *she* had met Him?—And—to Simon's wife's mother?—And—to that penitent sinner in Simon's house?

And—beginning at the end of our story,—"how it befell" to this poor woman, whom no doctor on earth could heal?

It may all be summed up in these words: "He received them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed those which had need of healing." (Luke ix. 11.)

Why is it that I am not afraid of tiring you with so many stories ending just the same?

It is a delightful sameness! We may thank God that there is no variety! No story ending with—Jesus sent her away empty!

I cannot find any story that ends in that way! So you must be content to hear the same thing over and over again: "He healed those which had need of healing."

Our faith is weak; it cannot always take hold of the Promise: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) So we have story after story, "written for our learning," that if we fail to learn it in one, we may learn it in another. "Line upon line!" "He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. ciii. 14.)

But though all the stories have the same ending, we find a beautiful variety in the beginning, to suit all sorts of sinners.

To-day's is very striking. It is sure to suit some one here.

Our Lord was already on His way to cure a dying child. (Vv. 22—24.) We must leave out that history. The Bible is *too* full! As we pass along, we leave by the way-side more flowers than we gather. We need Eternity, to gather all!

On His way, then, to the house of Jairus, a crowd of people follow Him.

In that crowd was one poor woman, who little thought that she was to receive such a blessing from Jesus that day, as should make her "a pattern to them which hereafter should believe on Him to Life Everlasting." (1 Tim. i. 16.) She little thought that her own humble history was that day to be taken up and woven into "the Gospel of Jesus Christ," (Ch. i. 1,) or that she would meet some in Heaven who first laid hold of Jesus through her example.

"None of us liveth to himself." (Rom. xiv. 7.) Who can tell where the influence will stop, of even one secret act of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ this day, in any of your hearts?

Let us find out what we can, of this poor sufferer's history. (Vv. 25, 26.)

She had "need of healing!" But, had she lived in these days, the "Hospital for INCURABLES" would seem the fittest place for her. Any kind friend who tried to "get her in" would have plenty to say!—"A most urgent and distressing case!"

For was not the disease of long standing? Making her cure more, or less, likely?

Had any attempt at cure been already made? *Many* such attempts? With much success? With any success at all? With even the contrary effect? Yes:—she "had suffered many things," at the hands of many doctors; and all the pain had brought no relief from pain. She was "nothing bettered;" but, on the contrary, "grew worse."

And even if she could hear of a new doctor, more clever than all the others put together, could she afford to pay for any more doctoring? No: for she "had spent all that she had."

Wretched woman! She had "need of healing;" but no hope of healing! Who can help pitying her?

Yet, *thou* art that wretched being, if not yet saved by the Lord Jesus! For whether you know it or not, *your soul* is filled with a worse disease.

What is that disease?—SIN!

Her disease was of long standing. How long? ("Twelve years!") But yours—even that of the very youngest in the Class—any who are still uncured—has been upon you for *years* longer than that! Time has not cured you; and never will; you will not "outgrow" it, as people outgrow what are called "children's diseases."

Children sometimes fancy they will grow "good" when they are "grown-up!" Well, here you are, all "grown-up!" Has that cured you? No; but the world holds you, (your own hearts will tell you to whom I am speaking:—I can but speak the word to the outward ear; God, speaking to your hearts, will apply it!—the world holds you)—some

of you—faster than ever! You find it harder work to turn to Christ now, than in childhood; and each year it grows harder still. (Jer. xiii. 23.) It is a disease of long standing, that wants curing in that soul of yours!

And you have tried “many physicians,” some of you. There are “many;” and they are much sought after by sick souls. Few people go straight to Jesus. Most of us, indeed, try the whole round of other “physicians” first, and go to Jesus Himself last of all—if ever!

Let us think of some of these other “physicians.”

1. “Pleasure.”

[I mean, *worldly* pleasure. We must not let the world have this beautiful name for its own. “The river of Thy pleasures”—“Pleasures for evermore” (Ps. xxxvi. 8; xvi. 11)—are Bible names for something more worth having! But here I am speaking of what people who *know no better* call “Pleasure.”]

What is the prescription given by this

doctor? "You are dull; you want amusing; you have been thinking too seriously; you are too young for that sort of thing; a little excitement is what you want!" &c.

Is it?—Prov. xiv. 12, 13. Ecc. vii. 2—6, Is. xxii. 12—14. Luke vi. 21, 25; xv. 15—18. James iv. 4—10.)

2. "Worldly Business."

To some of you, it may be mere drudgery; but in many situations, it is very exciting. "The cares of this life" turn to "pleasures!" For work, in itself, is a pleasure, to some minds—to some that see no attractions in what is called "amusement." And success, in business of any sort, is a pleasure to almost every healthy mind.

All this is lawful and safe pleasure, in itself. It was among the pleasures prepared for man, in the garden of Eden. (Gen. ii. 15.) Man enjoyed his labour, and the fruit of his labour, in God.

But Sin came, and spoilt it all! And now, it needs a very watchful heart, to keep "the cares of this life" in their right place.

If you have begun to think about your sins, and feel restless and sick at heart, be sure that one of the many "physicians" Satan will send to prescribe for you, is "Worldly Business." He will say, by the mouth of this physician,—and you know he often speaks the truth, and then makes a wrong use of the truth—"Anyhow, this must be attended to! Business cannot wait." "Your soul's concerns *can* wait," he adds: and that is *not* true! So he holds up the necessity of the case, or the pleasure of money-getting, or the pleasure of "success," with or without money; (and this deceives many people who do not care for money in itself;) or perhaps, he quotes *half* a text, in his usual way, and says: "It is written;" "Not slothful in business;" and takes care to stop short of—"Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Rom. xii. 11.)

And so, with sleeping draughts to lull the pain of conscience, and stimulants to keep up the strength of the old nature, he tries to persuade you that "the cares of this world"

are the best remedy for soul-cares ! (1 Tim. vi. 9. Mark iv. 18, 19.)

3. "Formal religion."

In "Pilgrim's Progress," this physician is called "Mr. Legality." His advice is always the same, though in various words. "Do your duty ; keep God's Law ; be good ; or, at least, observe the outward forms of religion ; and that will give you peace." This is like using a broken leg, in hopes it will get strong by exercise !

Yet there is no "physician" more sought after, by those who have begun in earnest to seek a cure. Few pass by his door altogether ; almost all stop to consult him on their way to Christ. For all he says is so true, as far as it goes ! He reads long passages out of the Bible, and says after each : "*Do this.*" We go away, and we try. But it seems to us, that the more we "try," the worse we get ; we suffer much, and gain no relief ; (Rom. x. 3 ; vii. 9, 24 ;) and we find it true of this "physician," as of all the rest, that after all our time and

toil and pain, we are "nothing bettered," but rather grow worse! (Hosea v. 13. Job xiii. 4.)

(V. 27.) But just when all seemed hopeless, a ray of hope came to this poor "Incurable." She "*heard of Jesus.*"

What did she hear of Him, I wonder? Why, there was but one thing to hear;—that He cured all manner of sickness, "without money and without price," without delay, and without pain.

Have *you* "heard of Jesus?" Where? Here, at least.—And when? This day, if never before.—And what do you hear of Him? Just what that woman heard!

After that, was it not her own fault if she did not seek Jesus for herself? (Jer. viii. 22.) And so it is with *you*.

(V. 27.) Did she act on what she had heard? How? She "came in the press behind, and touched His garment." "*For*, she said *within herself*," (Matt. ix. 21.)—we are allowed to see into her heart, for this

moment in her history—: “If I may touch but His clothes,”—what then? (“I shall be whole.” V. 28.)

What made her feel sure of this? The stories she had heard of what Jesus had done for others. (See Luke vi. 19.)

This is the use of “Memoirs,” and of all the stories you hear of what Christ does for sinners now. Apply them to yourself. Say: If *I* seek Christ as they did, “*I* shall be whole.”

(V. 29.) Had she expected too much from Jesus? Was she cured? How far cured? How soon? At what expense?

And yet—she had not clung fast and long to Him;—only—? (“Touched.”) And only touched—what?—His hand or His feet, so that He could not help noticing her? No; only—? “The hem of His garment.” But—it was “His garment!” There lies the secret. She had trusted the right Friend! It was nothing in herself that she trusted;—not even her looks of misery, to move His compassion: nothing in

her hand did she bring,—no fine words in her mouth. She forgot herself, and remembered nothing but what she had “heard of Jesus.” She simply believed that He, and He only, could cure her. It never entered her heart to fear that His saving power would fail, in her case.

It ought never to enter yours! It is Satan’s lie, if Christ be true. (John vi. 37.) Do forget yourself—and touch the Saviour—*anyhow!* Do not stop till Eternity, *getting ready to touch Him.* *He* is ready! From that day to this, “as many as” have “touched Him” have been “made perfectly whole.” (Matt. xiv. 36. Heb. vii. 25.)

(V. 29.) Did she know she was cured?—And if *you* are cured, you ought to know it. 2 Cor. xiii. 5.) You *may* be cured without knowing it, just as we fancy we feel a thorn in the finger, or a grain of dust in the eye, even after it is gone. But you cannot really “enjoy” your health, till you know the disease is cured. Honestly ask God to-night to shew you the truth.

(V. 30.) Who knew of the cure, besides the woman herself? (Jesus.) She thought He would never notice a poor humble woman like that; but He did.

How pleasant it is to find we are not forgotten, by those who have plenty of others to think of besides ourselves!

They say our Queen never forgets those with whom she has had to do.

And our Lord Jesus—with His “Royal Heart of Love”—does HE ever forget those with whom he has to do? Never! If *you* “touch” Him to-day, He will remember you to all Eternity!

(V. 32.) Why did Jesus turn round so quickly? Did he actually care to “see” her? Yes; He could not feel He had cured her, without loving her. Even you and I, with our poor cold hearts, cannot help loving those we have helped in any way. Much more does Jesus care for those whom He has saved. He wants to “see” the woman He has cured. “Who touched My clothes?”—we hear Him ask.

(V. 31.) Who? Why, in such a crowd, those nearest to Him could not help touching Him! But "somebody" had touched Him (Luke viii. 46) in a different way from all the others:—with a *trusting* touch! And Jesus will, not rest, till He stands face to face with "her that had done this thing," and receives a personal answer to His question: "Who touched Me?"

"WHO TOUCHED ME?"

No other question will matter, a hundred years hence! How many among us can answer it to-day? We have all met together, to meet Him! how many have really "touched" Him?

Jesus "looked round about," till His eye rested on her. He knew already who it was that had touched Him; and she knew it also. Why then has He set His heart on hearing her confess it?—For the sake of others!

For His own sake, He could have waited till the crowd was gone, and then spoken to her alone.

And as for her, the cure was complete already.

But the rest of the crowd would have missed a great deal ; and so should we !

(V. 33.) Does she selfishly hang back ? No, though she seems to have been a timid woman. She “came — trembling, — and falling down before Him, she declared—unto Him—*before all the people,*” &c. (Luke viii. 47.)

(V. 34.) And so, she gained a blessing for herself, as well as for others. Was it not worth the effort, to hear those words ?

For your own sake, and for the sake of others, do not hide what God has done for your soul ! (Ps. lxvi. 16.)

The world is one great Hospital of “Incurables !” And there is but One “Physician” who can cure anybody in it.

What is *your* position in this great Hospital ? Cured, or uncured ?

In either case, learn from this story what to do.

(1.) Are you *uncured*?

Then go to the "Physician." He is close at hand. You may "touch" Him, without moving from your seat! Only believe—and you shall find it true—that "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole!" (Acts ix. 34.)

(2.) Are you *cured*?

Then thank your good Physician, and tell others of Him. "Be thankful unto Him, and speak good of His Name!" (Ps. c. 4. Pr. Book Version.)

In common hospitals, patients go out, when cured, to make room for others. But in this great World-Hospital, Christ *keeps* His cured patients; some of them for many years! (John xvii. 15.)

And why? Not only for their own sakes, —(see Mark iv. 29. 2 Pet. iii. 18. James i. 2, 3,) but for the sake of others. You are *wanted*! (Phil. i. 24.)

Some in the Hospital will not believe they are ill; and so they will not submit to the Remedy. *They* want you!

Some see their danger, but think they can

cure themselves!—wholly, or, at least, in part. *They* want you!

Some think there is no hope for them; they are “too far gone.” *They* want you!

Some think the Physician has forgotten them, and will never complete the work He has begun. *They* want you!

Yes, and those who are cured want you too. We want each other!

Speak often one to another: try to conquer reserve, and “let your talking be of *His* doings.”

None of us can afford to forget—oh! let us help each other to remember—that, from first to last, the Saviour’s Promise is the sinner’s only hope: “**HIM THAT COMETH TO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT.**”



Lesson XVII.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—FEEDING THE HUNGRY.

St. Mark vi. 33—44.

LAST Sunday, we watched Jesus in a crowd, where "somebody" touched Him who "had need of healing," and was healed immediately.

To-day, we find Him again in a crowd. He seldom had the luxury of being alone. The people that we find around Him to-day had come at a time when He had wanted to be alone—at least, alone with His disciples. (Vv. 31, 32.) He needed rest; and so did they.

But He always let His plans be interrupted, without a murmur. (See ch. i.

35—39. Luke ix. 56; last clause.) He “had no plan but to follow the plan of His Father.” *

If we were like Him, we should never be vexed when our “work,” or our rest, is “interrupted” by anything fresh which God sends us to do. And then, we should have more rest of heart: and then—we should do more real “work” for God.

“ . . . To the faithful there is no such thing
As disappointment: failures only bring
A gentle pang, as peacefully they say,
‘ His purpose stands, though mine has passed away.’ ” †

And so, our Lord quietly laid aside His own plans, and gave up His day of rest to the “much people” who had come after Him. St. Luke is speaking of this day especially, when he says—in the beautiful verse we found out last Sunday: “He received them, and spake unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed them that had

* Adolphe Monod.

† “The Name of Jesus, and Other Verses,” &c.,
W. Macintosh.

need of healing." Read the passage again. (Luke ix. 10, 11.) How kind! How doubly kind, on such a day as this!

Did He do it "grudgingly, or of necessity?" St. Mark shall tell us.

(V. 34.) See! We are allowed to look into His heart! There is no impatience; no vexation; no anger! Nothing but—"Compassion!"

Send up one thought of thanksgiving to Him, before you go further! Love Him, for His Love! As He was "disposed *in His heart*, so" He gave—His time, and strength, and Life. "He was "a cheerful Giver!" (2 Cor. ix. 7. Compare John x. 11, 17, 18. Contrast Prov. xxiii. 7.) When He "received" these people, His welcome was *heartfelt*. Unlike that "worldly politeness" which is but "the imitation of Christian Love," His Love was "without dissimulation." He shewed mercy "with cheerfulness;" (*i. e.*, real delight;) He gave "with simplicity;" (*i. e.*, sincerely; liberally. Compare Col. iii. 22. 2 Cor. viii. 2; ix. 11; see marg.

reading—; ix. 13. James i. 5:—various translations of the same word.)

“Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because He laid down His Life for us:” (1 John iii. 16:)—not only on the Cross at last, but day after day.

“And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,” in like manner, day after day. (Eph. v. 2.)

(Vv. 35, 36). Towards evening, the disciples began to think that the multitudes must have had enough for one day, and that their Master must have given them all He had to give. How little they guessed that the most wonderful of all His loving-kindnesses and tender mercies that day, was yet to come;—that the best was being kept till last, like a glorious sunset after a bright day! (See 2 Sam. vii. 19, 21. Eph. iii. 20. James v. 11. Ps. xxvii. 13, 14; cxlv. 8, 9. 15, 16.)

(V. 36.) They tell Jesus—what He very well knew—that the people “have nothing to eat.” (Compare John ii. 3.)

Now comes the question: What is to be done?

And what do they suggest? ("Send them away," &c.) For—as they had said: "This is a desert place;" *i. e.*, there is nothing to be had here, for love or money! So all they could suggest was that the people should go and "buy themselves bread"—away from Jesus, and at their own expense!

(V. 37.) What does Jesus say in answer? (Compare Matt. xiv. 16.) "They need not depart; give ye them to eat!"

What! Then, and there, and by the hands of those poor disciples, were these "five thousand men, besides women and children," (and the children must have been very hungry by this time,)—to be fed and filled?"

Did Jesus know that the disciples had no means of doing this, out of their own resources?

And when He commits a Bible-Class like this, to a Teacher like me, does He know that I have no means of obeying His

command, "Give ye them to eat," out of my own resources? Yes, He knows I have none—except in Himself! "Nothing to set before" you—except what He gives me to give away!

(V. 37.) The disciples heard His command, and they knew it must be obeyed; but the more they thought of it, the more hopeless the case appeared. They told Him all the plans they could think of; and very poor plans these were!

(1.) Two hundred pennyworth of bread, bought in the villages round about: and what of that? (John vi. 7.) "Not sufficient," even if each person was only allowed to take "a little!" (Compare 2 Kings iv. 43. Numb. xi. 21—23.)

(2.) Five loaves and two fishes, to divide among more than five thousand people; and, as Andrew said, "what are they, among so many?" (John vi. 9.)

And now the disciples have come to the end of their "ways and means."

First, they had proposed to send the

people away from Jesus, to get food for themselves. Would *you* have liked that, if you had been one of the five thousand?

Next, to buy "two hundred pennyworth of bread"—just enough to keep most of them from starving! Would you have liked that?

And thirdly, to give them those "five loaves and two fishes;"—not more than enough—for the loaves then in use were small—to satisfy five hungry men out of the five thousand! Would *you* have liked that, even if you had been one of the "five?"

Pause, to learn something worth learning. "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man." (Ps. cxviii. 8.) For man, at best, can do little for you. A "multitude of thoughts," and sorrows, and difficulties, will arise in your heart and life, from time to time, in which man cannot help you. He who is richest in earthly friends, is poor without the friendship of Jesus. For there is no other friend, whose counsel and help we can always have, and can always

trust;—always at hand, and always at leisure. (Matt. xxviii. 18, 20.)

Learn this, early in life : it will save you many a pang. If you expect too much from friends—even Christian friends,—you will suffer for it. By all means, have Christian friends if you can, and learn from them all you can. But take care, lest you “provoke the Lord to jealousy,” (1 Cor. x. 22,) by expecting from them what Christ alone can give. We hear one say to another sometimes : “Oh ! if I could but be always with *you*, I could be good !” It is not true. Christ’s disciples have nothing to set before you that can satisfy your soul’s hunger, except what He gives them to give you. And this He can give you just as easily, without letting it pass through their hands at all.

“Watch and pray !” Jesus Himself is necessary to you ; but none other. And some of those who know and serve Him best, really have none other ! “Watch and pray,” or your Christian friends may be a hindrance to

you, instead of a help. "Watch and pray," or you may have to learn it by the pangs of hunger; you may have to be brought very low, and feel very desolate, till you learn to say: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him!" (Ps. lxi. 5.)

(V. 39.) "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work!" The people are in expectation; the disciples are in expectation; and "the eyes of all wait upon THEE!"

He is ready. He had never doubted for a moment how the people were to be fed. (John vi. 5, 6.) He had only waited till they all looked to Him for it.

His first command had been—? (V. 37.) "Give ye them to eat."

His second command,—what is that? (V. 39.) This showed that He meant to enable His disciples to obey that first command. They were to "make the men sit down"—to be fed then and there;—not to "send them away."

Do you not think it must have needed strong faith in the disciples, to "make the

men sit down?" Yes; for what if Jesus should give them nothing, after all? Would not the disciples have felt ashamed of leading them to expect so much from Him?

It needs strong faith, to lead others to expect much from Jesus. We must be much with Him ourselves, if we would stir up others to look to Him for everything. We must be so much with Him, as to learn to expect—all he has promised! And then, our faith will help to keep alive the faith of others. We shall be able to say to those who are cast down: "Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Acts xxvii. 25.)

(Vv. 39, 40.) And now, the disciples are to "make the men sit down," in expectation of the coming feast.

Observe: everything is arranged by Jesus Himself; He looks after everything Himself. Never fear to trouble Him with details; He cares for details. They are not to sit down anyhow, and anywhere: but—? (V. 39.) "By companies—upon the green grass."

(1.) "By companies;" *i.e.*, as further explained in v. 40—? ("In ranks; by hundreds, and by fifties.")

There is no confusion: He *numbers* those whom He feeds; each is equally cared for; there is a place for everybody, and everybody is in his place—at Jesus' feast.

Is Jesus Christ "the Same" now? (Heb. xiii. 8.) If so, you are among these "numbered" ones—you that belong to Him, and are looking to Him to feed you. He knows the best place to feed you, as well as the best way. Do not doubt, that if you have asked Him to choose your place for you, you are in that "best place" now. "I know . . . where thou dwellest." (Rev. ii. 13.) And just there,—just where you are—He will feed and satisfy your soul.

(2.) "Upon the green grass."

Was this by chance? No! Our Lord Jesus is so considerate in little things! He cared for each and all of that "great multitude." Each was in his own place: all were on "the green grass." (See Ps. ciii. 14.)

He would not keep them standing, while He fed them; for He *knew what it was* to be "wearied with His journey," and to want to sit down and rest. (John iv. 6.) They may have been standing, before; but now He is especially going to show them that He cares for bodily wants, as well as for spiritual wants. So, before He provides them with food, He provides them with a resting-place. And a well-chosen, lovingly-chosen resting-place was "the green grass," in that hot country!

If ever you are ill in bed, or too weak to kneel down to pray, do not distress yourself. "The Lord is very pitiful!" He did not make these people stand, or kneel, while He fed them, to show respect to Him! And when you cannot stand, or kneel, before Him, He can feed you,—while only resting! Some of His sweetest feasts are given at times like these. "The lame take the prey!" (Is. xxxiii. 23.) He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in

His bosom." (Is. xl. 11.) And *there* "He shall feed" them!

The great thing is to take the lowliest seat; to be content with "the green grass," and not want to climb up to seats of honour at the feast. This pleases the Lord Jesus more than anything! "To this man will I look, saith the Lord." (Is. lxvi. 2.; lvii. 15.) "Become as little children;" (Matt. xviii. 3;) like infant children at a summer "feast," seated on "the green grass," full of expectation, though bringing nothing in their hand. "Blessed be ye poor! For yours is the Kingdom of God! Blessed are ye that hunger now! For ye shall be filled." (Luke vi. 20, 21.)

(V. 41.) "When He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes,"—what then? ("He looked up to heaven.") And then? ("He blessed" them.)

Compare St. Luke's account, and St. John's, with this of St. Mark.

First, Jesus "looked up," and "gave thanks;"—leaving us an example.

And then, He "blessed" the bread, that it might multiply, and become enough to feed the multitude.

And then, He "broke" the bread, and gave it away. To whom? (To His disciples.) What for?—to keep, or to pass on?

It was their own bread which they were to give away; but—it had been given up to Jesus, and taken back from Jesus. It had been in the hands of Jesus; and that made all the difference!

You that long to feed other souls, shall I tell you the best way—the only way that can never fail? Go to Jesus, with those poor supplies of yours, and say: "Take the matter into Thy hands!" And "the little one shall become a thousand," as He puts it again into your hands, and bids you use it for all to whom He shall send you!

The secret of success in work, is to put all we have to give away—whether in time, money, influence, or "talent,"—into the hands of Christ, and take it all back from His own hands, day by day. All we have,

and all we do, must pass through the hands of Jesus; and then, a blessing shall rest on it for ever. "The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; . . . and thou shalt lend unto many nations." (Deut. xxviii. 8, 12.)

(V. 42.) The Feast has begun! Look and see! Those loaves which Jesus has blessed, and given back to His disciples to set before the multitude—they get no smaller, though 10,—20,—100,—1000—people are feeding on them! All whom the disciples have already passed, are eating,—and yet no less than before is left for the others! The very last man, woman, or child, had as much as the first!

But they had something more than dry bread. What besides? And *why*, do you suppose, did Jesus provide "fish" as well as bread?

A poor woman in a Hospital, one day, on being asked that question, answered: "To give the bread a relish!" The words were

homely ; but was it not the true answer ? It is not the only reason we could find, perhaps ; but it must be enough for to-day : *i. e.*, Jesus gave them “likewise of the fishes”—just to add to the pleasure ! Dry bread would have been enough to keep them from starving ! but He gives “liberally !” He wants them really to “enjoy” the feast ! (See 1 Tim. vi. 17.)—Can those people have ever read this story, who do not believe that Jesus loves them, and wants them to be happy ?

And how much—“according to St. John,”—was allowed for each person ? “As much as they would !” (John vi. 11.)

When you and I are in Eternity, we shall see that in this life, we also—all of us, had *as much as we would*—as much as we ourselves chose to have—of “Jesus Himself,” and all He has to give ! He not only giveth “liberally,” but—“upbraideth not.” (James i. 5.) He never yet blamed a soul for taking too much from Him. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” (Ps. lxxxi. 10.)

"I will fill it!" Was this the case here? "They did all eat;" but were they all "filled?" Yes! Even the children had had enough!

(V. 43.) "Enough,—*and to spare!*" How much was there "to spare?" As much as the whole supply at first? And more, too!

And yet, were even "the fragments" to be gathered up? Yes; for no one must think little of the smallest fragment of such a feast, though it is so plentiful.

And shall any of us go away this day, thinking little of such a Saviour, and such a feast? Shall any trample under foot the feast He offers, and then go away empty, and say there was nothing to be had?

O let all of us that have already "tasted that the Lord is gracious," stop those poor hungry souls,—(by prayer in our hearts, at this very moment,)—and make room for them all, in the prayer we offer for ourselves: "Lord, evermore give *us* this Bread!" (John vi. 34.)

JESUS HIMSELF has said—and He said it

just after providing this feast—: “He that cometh to Me shall *never* hunger.” (John vi. 35.)

It is true! We know it, in our hearts and in our souls! We that come to Him *do not* hunger—except for more and more of “His own Self.”

What then?

Let us care for the starving souls around us! Let us “keep close to Jesus,”—for their sakes as well as our own; that so, we may be always “filled with good things” ourselves, and able, with an overflowing heart, to say to those “starving souls:” “He *satisfieth* the longing soul, and *filleth* the hungry soul with goodness!”



Lesson XVIII.

“JESUS HIMSELF”—ON “THE HOLY MOUNT.”

St. Luke ix. 28—36.

How many of the twelve disciples were eye-witnesses of this glorious scene? (Three.) Which three? (V. 28.)—As usual! Always these three, when “the twelve” were not with Him!

Do you know, that some of Christ’s disciples live much nearer to Him than others do,—and see much more of His glory! And do you know, that unless you try to “keep close to Jesus” at all times, you will miss a great deal? Do not be content with being one of the “twelve:” seek to be one of the “three!”

Let us read the account given by one of the “three:” *i. e.*, by St. Peter. “We were with Him in the holy mount,” he says;—

"eye-witnesses of His majesty. (2 Pet. i. 16—18.) Yes; it is no "cunningly-devised fable;" it is a true story.

Why was it that Peter and the other two "kept it close, and told no man—in those days—any of those things which they had seen?" (Matt. xvii. 9.)

"Those days" are over now, thank God! "The Son of Man" is "risen from the dead;" and St. Peter's Epistle, and this Gospel of St. Luke, and the two first Gospels also, have told us the story. It is within our reach;—in our hands! And though we cannot—as yet—be "*eye-witnesses* of His majesty," we may be *heart-witnesses* of that majesty, this very day!

O for a prepared heart! (Prov. xvi. 1. Ps. xxiv. 3, 4. Heb. x. 22.) For without holiness "no man shall see the Lord, here or hereafter. (Heb. xii. 14. Matt. v. 8.) "Come, Holy Ghost!"

"Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of Thy grace;"—

that so, the veil may be "taken away," and

we may—"with open (*i. e.*, unveiled) face"—behold—"as in a glass—the Glory of the Lord!" (2 Cor. iii. 15—18.)

(V. 28.) "It came to pass about an eight days after *these sayings*." What sayings? (See Vv. 18—27.)

Solemn and earnest sayings were those! About His own Cross; and about theirs.

"Let these sayings sink down into your ears." (V. 44.) We have not time to linger over them now. Read them quietly, this evening; if possible, when alone. And when you come to those words: "The Son of Man must suffer many things," (v. 22,) pause, and ask yourself, Why "must" He suffer?

Why? Let us look for the answer, first, in His loving Heart: and then, in our own sinful hearts and lives. (Eph. v. 2. Gal. ii. 20; i. 4.)

He was determined to die, though no enemy could make Him die: (John xix. 11:)—so determined, that no earthly friend

could make Him save Himself! (Matt. xvi. 22, 23.)

But had He counted the cost?

Yes:—

. "He knew full well
The grief that then shall be—
The grief that angels cannot tell—
Our God in agony!"

Future trials are hidden from *us*: we need not, and must not, bear the burden of them. (James iv. 14. Matt. vi. 34.) But Jesus knew the end, from the beginning. For three and thirty years, He saw His Cross before Him—each day, a little nearer. And sometimes, His Human Nature almost gave way under the burden. (See John xii. 27.)

Just now,—if we may so say, with all reverence,—He must have seen the Cross before Him, even more clearly than usual. For He had been telling His disciples about it, for the first time. Now if His Human Nature was like ours—and we know that it

was so, (Heb. ii. 14—18,)—speaking of it to others must have made it more real than ever to Himself. Sometimes, when a great trial is before us, we dare not tell those who love us most, lest their loving pity should make us pity ourselves, (Matt. xvi. 22; margin,) and so, take away our courage.

Was it, then, to strengthen Jesus Himself—as “Son of Man”—to endure the Cross, that—after speaking of it to His disciples—He had this foretaste of “the glory that should follow?” (1 Pet. i. 11.) Was it sent, like the angel in Gethsemane, to help the “Man of Sorrows” in a time of need? (See Is. l. 6, 7. Heb. xii. 2.)

We cannot tell. “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father.” (Matt. xi. 27.) What “the Son” needed, “in the days of His flesh,” and how “the Father” supplied His need, we cannot tell. These are “secret things.” (Deut. xxix. 29.)

Anyhow, the disciples must have needed special help just now—after “these sayings” of Jesus. For what had He told them?

1. That He "must suffer many things."

And did not they love Him? It needs strong faith, to see our loved ones suffer, or to bear the prospect of their suffering: still stronger faith, than to bear it for ourselves. Peter's faith had just failed under that trial; (Matt. xvi. 22;) it needed strengthening.

" When our earthly loved ones sink,
Lend us, Lord, Thy sure relief;
Patient hearts, their pain to see,
And Thy Grace, to follow Thee!"

2. That He must be "rejected."

They were slow to learn that His Kingdom was "not of this world." (John xviii. 36.) The next time He spoke of His Death, none of them dared "rebuke" Him again, though "they were exceeding sorry." (Matt. xvii. 22, 23.) But still, they never realized the truth; and when His words were fulfilled, for a time their faith gave way altogether. (Mark xiv. 50; xvi. 10—14.) If they could be so weak, even after some of them had

seen His glory, what would they have been without it?

3. That they must take up their cross, and follow Him.

Imagine yourself one of the disciples, and hearing this for the first time! And you will feel that you would need strength and courage, to act upon it. You will see *why* our Lord went on to speak of the Day "when He shall come in His own glory"—mark those words—and "His Father's," &c. (Compare Matt. xvi. 27.) You will feel, that to think of that Day would have helped you more than anything! And if only you could have had a foretaste of that Day, such as these three disciples had! . . .

Whenever your courage fails, after reading "these sayings," to act upon them, and confess Christ before men, let me advise you what to do. Keep your Bible open, and read what comes next. Read *this story*! Observe, it comes *next*, in all the three Gospels. First, the "sayings" about the Cross; then, the "vision" of the Crown.

You may need that "vision" sorely, some day! "No Cross, no Crown!"

"The Cross—to Jesus—was no dream!
Shall it be so to us?"

No! And we will not wish it could be so! (Acts xiv. 22. Heb. xii. 1, 2. Rev. iii. 21; vii. 13—17.) But when our hearts faint within us, we will think of the "vision" on "the holy mount!" We will think of the glorious realities it set forth! And then we shall be able to bear "our light affliction"—"for a moment!" (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. Rom. viii. 17, 18.)

Now let us "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest," the story before us, and lay it up in our hearts for the day of trial.

(V. 28.) Where did this take place? (On a "mountain.") St. Matthew adds—? ("A high mountain—apart." xvii. 1.)

We must be alone with Jesus—in heart, even if not outwardly;—"apart" from the world, (compare Mark vii. 33; viii. 23,)—quiet and still, (Ps. xxiii. 2,)—above the

world, (Col. iii. 1—3,) —“ looking unto Jesus,” (Heb. xii. 2,)—if we would see His glory. (Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2.)

This seems to have been in the night. (Vv. 32, 37. Compare Matt. xvii. 9, 14—16. Mark ix. 9, 14—18. 2 Pet. i. 18, 19.)

Many of God's people will tell you that their brightest “visions” of Jesus have been in the night :—often, literally so—in wakeful and suffering nights ; and very often, in the “night” of affliction. (See Acts xxiii. 11 ; xxvii. 23, 24. Job xxxv. 10. Ps. lxxiii. 5, 6.) “Oh! *such* a night I have had!”—were the first words spoken by a poor sufferer in a hospital one morning, to her “visitor.” “Nothing *happened*, you know,” she said in explanation ;—*i. e.*, nothing *outward* :—“but”—and her face was lighted up with holy joy as she said it—“I saw the LORD, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple!” (Is. vi. 1.)

Perhaps the nearest approach we have ever had, or can ever have on earth, to the experience of the three disciples on “the

holy mount," has been while watching the death-bed of some Christian. It has been—a night of glory! And common life, after that, seems to us—what the common daylight must have seemed to those three disciples "on the next day, when they were come down from the hill,"—not worthy to be compared with the glory of which we have caught a glimpse!

The stars are shining all day; but we do not *see* them—unless from a deep pit, or through a telescope—till night. And Jesus Himself—the sum and substance of all the Promises—is "with" His people "alway;" (Matt. xxviii. 20;) but most of them do not *see* how near He is, till "night" comes on. Then—when "the darkness deepens,"—when "Earth's joys grow dim," and "its glories pass away,"—He is "transfigured" before us! We begin to learn "how great is His goodness, and how great is His Beauty!" (Zech. ix. 17.) His perfections and His promises become *real* to us, one after another, like the stars in fading day-

light, till we almost realize what it will be when the "Morning Star" itself shall appear! (Study Ex. xxxiii. 18—23, with John i. 14—18. 2 Cor. iv. 6. 2 Pet. i. 19. Rev. xxii. 5, 16.)

(Vv. 28, 29.) What was our Saviour doing, when this glorious change came over Him? (Praying.)—Is He not our Example, here, as everywhere? Then let us learn from this, that our best blessings come upon us and "overtake" us (Deut. xxviii. 2) on our knees.

Let us look into this more deeply.

If we pray, as Jesus did, shall we be "transfigured" like Him? Yes! But how? Not in body, as yet; not till the Resurrection. (Rom. viii. 23. 1 Cor. xv. 42—53.) How then? "By the renewing of your *mind*. Look at—and look *into* the deep truths contained in—Rom. xii. 2, and 2 Cor. iii. 18. "Be ye transformed!" — "changed!" — "transfigured!" (The same word is used throughout, in the original.) Is not this the "Will of God?" Has He not called us "to

be conformed to the image of His Son?" (Rom. viii. 29.)

But are *all* His children called to this?—or only some? (2 Cor. iii. 18.) "*We all!*"—Do "*we all*" *realize* our "*heavenly calling?*" (Heb. iii. 1.) Do "*we all*" wish to have God's "*purpose*" (Rom. viii. 28, 29) fulfilled in us? Do we really wish to "*bear the image of the Heavenly*" (1 Cor. xv. 49) on earth?

There is but one way! Communion with God! "*Pray without ceasing;*" (1 Thess. v. 17;) and "*His glory shall be seen upon thee,*" (Is. lx. 2,) though, like Moses, you may not see it yourself, (Ex. xxxiv. 29, 30,) and though, even in the eyes of others, your progress may be slow. Do not be surprised if you find that the soul is not "*changed*" suddenly, as the Body of Jesus was, and as ours shall be at His Appearing, (Phil. iii. 20, 21. 1 John iii. 2,) but—little by little, "*from glory to glory!*"

And now let us read St. Luke's description

of the glorified Saviour. (V. 29.) And St. Matthew's. (xvii. 2.) And St. Mark's. (ix. 2, 3.)

We cannot bear the sight long. We must not look too curiously, or too closely; but as from a distance, "with reverence and godly fear." (See Ex. iii. 3—6.)

Whose glory was it, with which He was thus clothed? Was it borrowed?—or was it His own? (John xvii. 5, 24.) Then He had emptied Himself of it, and put on "the form of a servant," of His own free will! For whose sake?—How can you help loving Him—you that do not love Him yet? And why do we—all of us—love Him so little? Why—of the many "that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," (Eph. vi. 24.)—are there so few that seem to love Him *devotedly*?

(Vv. 30, 31.) Was Jesus alone in His glory? No; two glorified saints "appeared in glory" with Him. Who were they? (Moses and Elias.) They had been remarkable men, in their lives—as Giver and

Restorer of the Law;—remarkable also, as to the *end* of their lives. (See Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6. 2 Kings ii. 11.)

These two men, in glorified bodies, appeared on "the holy mount." Did they speak to their Saviour? Of what? ("His decease.") Peter had tried to stop him, when He spoke of this; but Moses and Elias did not try to stop Him; they spoke of it themselves!—If you and I are "numbered with the saints in glory everlasting," we shall love to speak to Jesus Himself, about that His "His Precious Death." . . . "THOU wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by THY Blood!" (Rev. v. 9.)

(V. 32.) And how did Peter and the two other disciples bear this glorious sight?—Were they able to enjoy it? (No.) The thought of it may have been a great help to them afterwards; (2 Pet. i. 16—18;) but at the time, what is said of them? They were "heavy with sleep!"—*i. e.*, weighed down with sleep. So also in Gethsemane! Alike in His hour of agony, and in His

hour of glory, "their eyes were heavy!" (Matt. xxvi. 43.)

In spite of their drowsy feelings, however, they kept awake. (The word is the same that in Matt. xxvi. 38, 40, 41, is translated "watch;" and, in 1 Thess. v. 10, "wake;" *i. e.*,—not, wake up from sleep, but—remain awake.) And so, though "heavy with sleep," they did just manage to keep awake; and they saw it all. They were "eye-witnesses of His majesty."

But they did not really enjoy their privilege. The glory was too bright for unglorified saints to bear: and "they were sore afraid," from first to last. (Compare the three accounts.)

Sometimes we wish that we could see Jesus with our own eyes,—if only for a moment! But oh! we could not bear it yet—not while we ourselves are "in the body!" (2 Cor. v. 6—8.) We must wait a little longer—till "the *body* of our humiliation" is changed into "the Image of the Heavenly," as the *soul* has already been.

(Phil. iii. 21.) And then, "delivered from the bondage of corruption," we shall be able to bear the joy! (Rom. viii. 21.)

(V. 32 again.) "They saw His glory, and—the two men that stood with Him" in that glory. Did they know those "two men" at once? (Yes.) And yet, they had never seen them before; and they were not calm enough to be wise.

Be comforted, then, and "comfort one another," "concerning them which are asleep"—in Jesus. Those weary bodies have laid them down to rest—they are out of sight just now:—and the night seems long. But "the night is far spent;" and "Joy cometh in the Morning!" (Rom. xiii. 12. Ps. xxx. 5.) "Yet a little while!" (Heb. x. 37.)

Then, when the blessed Morning
Shall suddenly appear,
Refreshed, and clothed with glory,
What greetings shall we hear!

For we shall know our loved ones,
And by them shall be known,
And safely, then,—for ever!—
May claim them as our own.

is that, which speaks "out of the cloud?" Is it Peter's, again? Or the Voice of Jesus? No; it is that of God the Father! What are His words? "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON! HEAR HIM!"

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His Voice, and shall come forth." (John v. 28, 29.)

Shall we wait till then, to "hear Him?" God forbid! Let us "hear Him" now!

Let these "Sayings" of His sink down into our ears, and hearts, and lives:

(1.) "IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS—DAILY,—AND FOLLOW ME."

(2.) "TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH WILL I GRANT TO SIT WITH ME IN MY THRONE, EVEN AS I ALSO OVERCAME, AND AM SET DOWN WITH MY FATHER IN HIS THRONE." (Rev. iii. 21.)

"Hear Him!" "Follow Him!" —
"through thorns to thrones!"

For we are "Joint-Heirs with Christ ;—
if so be that we suffer with Him, that we
may be also glorified together ! "



LESSON XIX.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—BLESSING LITTLE
CHILDREN.

St. Mark x. 13—16.

"BELOVED, ye hear in this Gospel the words of our Saviour Christ, that He commanded the children to be brought unto Him; how He blamed those that would have kept them from Him; how He exhorteth all men to follow their innocency. Ye perceive how by His outward gesture and deed He declared His good will toward them; for He embraced them in His arms, He laid His hands upon them, and blessed them."

"Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will likewise favourably

receive"—not "little children" only, but—all that come to Him "as little children!"

Learn the inner meaning of this story, by the Holy Spirit's teaching, and you will find it was not written for little children only, but for you and for me. You will know by personal experience what these words mean: "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."

But what can I say to you on such a subject?

"Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought!"

All I can say or think is weak and cold, compared with what it should be: for my subject is—"the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!"—And yet, we must try to learn something of it; and we must tell each other all that we have learnt ourselves, and everything fresh that we learn, about that Love. St. Paul himself could not make you "comprehend" it, unless you are taught

by the Spirit of God. But if you are thus taught, even the poor weak words you will hear to-day will not be in vain.

Why do I want you to hear of the Love of Christ? Because if you hear, you may believe. (Rom. x. 17.) And if you believe, you will love. (1 John iv. 19.) And if you love, you will obey. (John xiv. 23; xxi. 15—17.)

Will you listen, then, to “the Word of the Lord?” And oh! *will you believe* it?

“I have *loved* you, saith the Lord!” (Mal. i. 1, 2.) “Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?”—“Wherein?” “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” “Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because He laid down His Life for us!” (John xv. 13, 1 John iii. 16.)

Do you “perceive” this Love? Is it a reality to you? Can you all say: “We have known—and believed—the Love that God hath to us?” (1 John iv. 16.)

“Who hath *believed* our report?” (Is.

liii. 1.) Who, among *you*?—*That* one lives for Christ and Eternity! *That* one grows in grace! *That* one wins souls for Christ!

Why should not all of you be Christians of this stamp? You will be, when the Love of Christ becomes a reality to you. I pray God, it may become a reality to you this day, if never before; by hearing and believing this story. It is one of the sweetest, simplest, loveliest,—of all the lovely stories of the Love of Jesus.

Listen, then! Let your hearts listen to this true story! And remember, that the living Jesus is listening too, and remembers it all!

Let us notice these three things:—

- (I.) What the Mothers did.
- (II.) What the Disciples did.
- (III.) What Jesus did.

I. What the Mothers did.

“They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them.”

We take it for granted that the “mothers”

brought them, as they were such "young children." The little ones would naturally be with them:—and besides, who but a mother would have taken the trouble, or even thought of bringing them at all? Who but a mother would have seen far enough into the heart of Jesus to believe that He would find time, and love, and blessings, to bestow on little children? There is no love like a mother's!—except the Love of "Jesus Himself."

So "they brought young children to Him." What for? "That He should touch them;" so St. Mark and St. Luke tells us. St. Matthew's words are: "that He should put His hands on them, and pray:"—*i.e.*, commend them to His Father's blessing. (Luke xviii. 15. Matt. xix. 13.)

But why did "infants" need the Saviour's hand upon them?

All others whom we have seen (in these Gospel stories) coming to Jesus, or brought to Him by their friends, were quite different from these little children. They had come,

because of sorrow, or sin, that pressed upon them heavily. They were sick, or sad, or sin-laden. But these children—what did they know of life's burdens? They were not ill—any of them—as far as we know: they were not “weary and heavy-laden.”

No: but were they not weak and helpless? Unable to do or to bear anything worth speaking of?—Ignorant too—sure to make mistakes, if left to themselves—knowing little of the world around them, or of the life before them? And therefore, did they not need the Love of Jesus? Yes; they needed it, to strengthen them;—to cherish, and protect, and guard, and guide them.

If I were teaching a class of “little children,” I should pause here, to show them how this story belongs to *them*: how plainly it tells them that Jesus loves little children, and that the sooner they ask Him to bless them, the happier they will be.

But you are not little children; and if only those who are children in *years* could

get the Saviour's blessing, I should not have the heart to read this story to *you*! It would only say to you—(to some of you—though not, I trust, to all—) Too late! Too late! You never sought the Saviour's blessing in childhood: you cannot seek it now!

But, thank God, this "sweet story of old" was not written for children only. It was written for you and for me.

For are we not, all of us, like those "young children," in many things? Are we not weak and helpless?—unable to do or to bear anything, in our own strength? Are we not ignorant, too,—sure to make mistakes, if left to ourselves,—perplexed by many things we see around us,—and knowing no more than a child what may happen to us to-morrow? Are we not ignorant—very ignorant—as to spiritual things? And as to the eternal world, so ignorant, that even when we know we are "sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," we are obliged to confess: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be?" (1 John iii. 2.)

If so, let us all come "as little children," and share the children's blessing. For "they brought young children" to Jesus: and He "put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

II. What the Disciples did.

"Rebuked those that brought them." Why? They seem to have thought their Master had more important work to do, than blessing such young children. "Trouble not the Master," (Luke viii. 49,) they seem to say.

How little they understood Him! He never had more "important" work to do, than His "Father's business;" and this He was doing all day and every day; so that He never counted one part of it more "important" than another. His life was not in fragments, but all one; one "work" occupied Him, from the manger to the Cross; so that He could say at last: "I have finished *the work* which Thou gavest Me to do." (John iv. 34; xvii. 4.)

And so, He found time and heart for even children that needed Him !

The disciples did not understand this, and therefore they tried to keep the children away. There never yet was a disciple of Jesus so full of love as "Jesus Himself." And some of His disciples are sadly *unlike* their Master.

When you begin to seek Christ, you may sometimes get discouraged by—even Christ's own servants, who ought to know better ! (See Acts ix. 26.)

Anyhow, you are sure to get hard words on the way from Satan's servants, or from Satan himself. He will come close to you, as soon as you try to come close to Christ, and will whisper many evil things, to keep you away. "He shoots arrows at those who come up to this gate, if haply they may die before they can enter in." (Pilgrim's Progress.) In this very chapter, you will find another instance of some one who tried to come to Christ, and was "rebuked" for it. (Bartimeus. V. 48.

Luke xviii. 39. See Ex. x. 10, 24, 27.
Mark iv. 15. 1 Pet. v. 8.)

III. The best part comes last.—What
JESUS HIMSELF did!

(1.) In Heart.

We are allowed to know—not only what
He did, outwardly, but—what He thought
and felt! I cannot read your heart, and
you cannot read mine; (1 Cor. ii. 11;) but
you and I may read the heart of “Jesus
Himself,” to-day!

Pause and think: how great an honour!
To be allowed to know—in this and other
Gospel stories,—what our Lord thought and
felt!

The newspapers tell us, in part, what our
Queen does, every day; but they do not
tell us what she thinks and feels. Yet
here we see the very heart of Jesus laid
open to us!

You would find it interesting to go
through the Gospels, and look out for all
the places where this privilege is given to

us. We have not time for it now. Will you try to do it at home?

What then did Jesus *feel*, when the disciples rebuked those that brought young children to Him? ("Much displeased.")

And yet, He was not often "displeased." Do we read that He was "much displeased," when a leper, though forbidden by the law, came close up to Him, with His horrible disease, and asked for help? No. He was "moved with" — not anger, but—? ("Compassion!" Mark i. 40, 41.) Was He "much displeased," when robbed of the rest He needed? (Mark vi. 31, 34.) Not even when mocked, and scourged, and crucified? (Luke xxiii.; especially vv. 28, 34.)

Have you ever thanked the Lord Jesus for the kind thoughts and intents of His heart, as well as for His kind acts? Do you not care to know what a person really feels towards you, who is outwardly kind to you?

And now, come close, and read the heart

of our holy Saviour. For once, He is "much displeased!" With whom? (His own disciples!) He loved them very much; what can they have done, to make Him so "much displeased" with them? ("Rebuked those that brought" their children to Him!)

"Only that?"—some of you might be disposed to say, at first. But the more you learn to know Jesus, the more you will see that this is the very thing that most displeases Him—to this day! Yes, for is He not "the Same," to this day? (I have often reminded you of it, in these "Lessons." But not too often)!

Then, when Satan whispers: Do not go to Jesus; you are too young; or—too old; or—too bad—too hard—too worldly; or—He will not receive you;—or—it is of no use till your circumstances grow easier—&c., &c.—what does Jesus feel? ("Much displeased.")

When worldly "friends" talk like this, is not Jesus "displeased" with them? Is He not "*much* displeased?" Indeed He is! Never

listen to such words. And never, never say such words to others! Can you bear to "displease" such a loving Saviour?

(2.) In Word.

What did Jesus *say*?—First, to the disciples? ("Suffer the little children to come," &c.) And then, to all? ("Verily I say," &c.)

Our Lord had already taught this lesson. (Matt. xviii. 3.) Which of us has learnt it? Which of us knows by experience what it is to "be converted, and become as little children?" "As little children;" confessing that we are "weak," and "helpless," and "ignorant;" but believing all that Christ tells us, and expecting all that He promises! Which of us is content to "live and learn," day by day, as a little child;—to live the life of a little child, to the end; never expecting to be able to "support ourselves," or to be "our own masters;" but content to live on the answer to this prayer: "Give us—day by day—our daily bread?"

None of us—whatever our spiritual state,—must ever forget these words of Jesus: “Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”

(3.) In Deed.

What did Jesus *do* with those young children? “He took them up in His arms,” &c. (V. 16.) It was no half-hearted blessing! No “distant” blessing!

“He took them up,” Himself! They need not climb up! Their mothers need not lift them up! His Love is strong; and it is tender. (Song viii. 6. Is. lxvi. 13.)

Some day, when you are ill and weak, so that you cannot read, or think, or pray, you will find out the value of this story—and of *this verse*—in a way you cannot do until you have passed through trial of this kind. We need many changes of circumstances, to explain many parts of the Bible to us. And before we fully understand how precious are these words of Jesus: “Suffer the little children to come unto Me,” we need to be

brought low—to have all our powers of thought and of will brought low,—by bodily weakness, or mental suffering. We must wait for such times as these, to experience the full sweetness of those words: “He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.”

I am too weak to climb into Thine arms,
So take me up Thyself: let all alarms
Be hushed to sleep upon Thy tender breast:
Forbid me not! I come to Thee for rest!

“In His Arms!”—He wants to have you in the nearest place possible, while He whispers sweet words of promise to His poor weak child. How near have you ever felt yourself drawn to the Lord Jesus? Never yet so near as you may be! “Let us draw near!”—Nearer than ever! (Heb. x. 22; vi. 19. Luke xv. 20. Deut. xxxiii. 12.)

“Put His Hands upon them!” The usual way of blessing. (Compare Luke xxiv. 50. Rev. i. 17.)

“And blessed them!”—The Blessing of

Jesus! How can I tell you what it is worth? Without it, life is not worth having. "Thy loving-kindness is better than life." (Ps. lxxiii. 3; iv. 6, 7.)

And now;—which of you has become "a little child," and received the Saviour's blessing?—Enjoy it! And use it for His glory! Let others see that "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich." (Prov. x. 22.) And if the sight of your riches makes them long to be "rich" too, tell them that you got those riches without deserving them, and that they may get the same, if they will come "as little children" to "Jesus Himself." (Rom. x. 12, 13.)

Which of you is seeking that blessing? "Seek! and ye shall find." Do not turn back, whoever may rebuke you on the way. "He that seeketh, findeth." (Matt. vii. 7, 8.)

Which of you has never yet begun to seek that blessing in earnest?—Yours has been a wasted life, hitherto! (See Is. lv. 2.)

You might have had "bread enough and to spare," and you have chosen to "perish with hunger"! (Luke xv. 17.)

But, even now, it is not too late. (2 Cor. vi. 2.) Become as a little child, to-day, Come as a little child, to the Saviour, to-day!

And then, doubt not, but earnestly believe, that like as He received these little children, so will He "favourably receive" *you*, "embrace" *you* "with the arms of His Mercy, and give unto" *you* — "the blessing of Eternal Life!"



Lesson XX.

“JESUS HIMSELF”—THE SINNER’S GUEST.

St. Luke xix. 1—10.

“THIS MAN receiveth sinners!” (Luke xv. 2.)

He invites them to come; (Mat. xi. 28;) and when they come, He gives them what He had promised;—a welcome, (John vi. 37,) and food, (John vi. 35,) and rest. (Matt. xi. 28, 29.)

Whosoever will, may become the Saviour’s guest. Even you and I!

What guests, for such a Saviour!

Suppose, when you get home to-day, you were to find a letter or messenger waiting for you, with an invitation to the Queen’s Palace! And suppose, believing that the

Queen herself had sent it, you were to accept the invitation, and be received graciously, and even affectionately !

Yet CHRIST's inviting sinners, and receiving them when they come—receiving them “graciously, and even affectionately”—this is far more wonderful. (See Hosea xiv. 2, 4.) And this, Sunday after Sunday, we have seen and heard, in these holy Gospels.

The most wonderful thing of all, though, we shall find in to-day's story :—Christ inviting Himself to be—“the Sinner's Guest !”

If the Queen were to invite herself to pay you a visit in your own house, would it not surprise you even more than if she were to invite you to her palace ?

Do you remember our “Lesson” on “the Day with Jesus ?” (See Lesson V. John i. 35—39.) As we then saw, it must have been a happy day ! Yet compare v. 39, in that story, with vv. 5, 6, in this story ; and say, was not Zacchæus still more honoured than those two disciples ?

More honoured than they;—yes—but not more honoured than you and I may be.

Whosoever will, may have the Saviour for a guest! Even you and I!

What a Guest, for such sinners!

Speak *to* Him in your heart, while we read and speak *of* Him together. Change the "HE" into "THOU!" I hope you do this often—I hope you do it *always*—when you read or hear of Jesus! Do it now! Not only afterwards, but *now*—during the "Lesson,"—"pray without ceasing" that you may learn to know Jesus—and know Him more and more intimately—as "the Sinner's Guest!"

(V. 1.) This was on the way to Jerusalem; just before His triumphal entry: and only a few days before His last sufferings for us. (See vv. 11, 28, 37, 38. Ch. xvii. 11; xviii. 31.)

"He must needs go through" Jericho. And here, as everywhere, He left a blessing behind Him. Not only for the blind man, who had already "received his sight," when

our story begins, and was among the crowd that "followed Him" as He "entered" Jericho. (Ch. xviii. 35—43.) When He had "passed through," He had brought salvation to the house of one who might have seemed the most unlikely man in Jericho to receive such a blessing.

That man was—? (Zacchæus.)

His *character* certainly did not stand high in the eyes of "the people." For (v. 7) when they saw that Jesus had gone to his house, "they all murmured, saying"—? ("He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner!")

And what does St. Luke tell us of his *circumstances*? Two things, which made him seem an "unlikely" man to welcome the Saviour.

(1.) He was "the chief among the publicans." (V. 2.)

And who were they?

Not what we now call "publicans:" but Jewish tax-gatherers, in the pay of the Roman Government. They were hated and

feared by the rest of the Jews. They grew rich at the expense of their brethren, by "extorting money on pretence of law." The Pharisees class them with the worst of "sinners." (Ch. v. 30—32; vii. 34; xv. 1, 2.) And so does our Lord Himself: though even of them, He speaks hopefully; (Matt. xxi. 31;) not refusing, as any one else would have done, to be called the "Friend of publicans and sinners!"

(2.) "He was rich."

Was this in his favour, as to spiritual things? Read Matt. xix. 23—26. "This is a hard saying;" (see Mark x. 26;) and Christ's disciples too often set it aside altogether. Too often, they act and speak as if to be (what they call) "free from care as to money matters" (see Luke xii. 19!) would make the way to heaven easier! Do not believe it! (Read Matt. xix. 23, 24 again; and James ii. 5.) Few learn so well to live by faith, as those who do not see before them the "daily bread" they ask for. The "rich" (*i.e.*, those "in easy circum-

stances," whatever their position in life,) are seldom so "rich in faith" as the poor. Thank God if you are not among the "rich!" For, if Christ be true, "a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of God!"

How then can Zacchæus be saved? For "he was rich." When the disciples asked how such as he could be saved, "Jesus, *looking upon them*, saith"—? ("With men, it is impossible, but not with God;" &c. Mark x. 27.)—Zacchæus is "rich;" so it is "hard" for him to "enter into the kingdom of God." But God is Almighty; so the hard thing is "possible."

Did it seem likely that this rich man would care to see the poor Prophet of Galilee? It would add nothing to his gains; the Prophet was too poor for that; and he might have known that those ill-gotten gains would trouble his conscience, if he listened to Jesus of Nazareth. If he had heard anything of Him, he must have heard what teaching to expect. (Ch. vi. 24, 25, 35;

viii. 14 ; ix. 25 ; xii. 13—21, 33 ; xiv. 12—14, 33 ; xvi. 11, 19—25 ; xviii. 22—25.)

Are not thousands of people *afraid* of thinking about anything but this world, for the very same reason ? (See Job xxi. 7, 9, 13—15. Matt. vi. 24.)

(V. 3.) Yet—"he sought to see Jesus." Can this be Zacchæus—that "rich" man—"the chief of the publicans ?"

He may have "sought" very ignorantly, and with mixed motives. But oh ! how ignorant we ourselves were, when first we "sought to see Jesus !"—how dark !—how worldly ! Can *we* afford to look down upon Zacchæus ? (1 Tim. i. 16.)—"First, the blade !" The Husbandman knows this, and "waiteth for the precious fruit." (Mark iv. 28, 29 ; Matt. xiii. 31, 32. James v. 7. Is. lx. 22. Observe last clause.)

Well for us, if we have been as *earnest* as Zacchæus, "from the first day until now !" For—however ignorantly, (see John iv. 15,) "he sought to see Jesus."—God's work in him had begun.

We little know what is passing in the hearts of others ! (See 1 Kings xix. 14, 18. 1 Sam. i. 12, 13. Acts ix. 11—13, 26.) “Why dost thou judge thy brother?” (Read Rom. xiv. 10—13.) It is easy to mistake “wheat” for “tares.” (Matt. xiii. 26—30.) There are “tares” in every field of “wheat;” and—thank God!—ears of wheat, in many a field of tares. “Let both grow together—until the Harvest.” Sometimes, where the tares grow thickest, the wheat ripens best ! (See Rev. ii. 13 ; iii. 4. Song Sol. ii. 2. Phil. ii. 15 ; iv. 22.)

There is many a “Zacchæus” who has begun to wish that he could “see Jesus,” and is secretly wondering (as we find out, *afterwards* !) why Christians never speak to him about Christ. They pass him by, through cowardice, or through fear of doing him harm, and perhaps no one on earth knows his longing, or gives him credit for so much as “a serious thought.” If you have “the spirit of Christ,” it will make you “of quick understanding” in finding out these longing

souls, and meeting them half-way. Is. xlii. 1—3; xi. 2, 3; xxxii. 20. Ecc. xi. 4, 6. Luke xv. 20. Rom. xv. 7.)

Zacchæus "sought to see Jesus who He was." But—here comes a difficulty! What are the next words? "Could not!" Indeed? This seems a sudden close to our story! He tried, and he failed.

And so, I suppose, he went home again! Is this all there is to hear?

No!—And yet, how was he to get over the difficulty? What was the reason that he could not "see Jesus," as he stood in the crowd? ("He was—little of stature.") That accounts for it! A little man, in a great crowd, has but a poor chance of seeing any "sight," unless he happens to get a front place. What is to be done?

What would you do yourself, if you wanted to see some great man pass by, and could not succeed at first? Would you give it up? Or, try some other place and plan? That depends on something else:—how much you really cared to see that great man.

If Zacchæus had not been very much in earnest, what would he have done? (Gone home.) And here the story would end: and Zacchæus would have been like—some of *you*!

For are there not some of *you*, who begin to have “serious thoughts,” and want to “see Jesus,” and actually take a few steps in the right direction,—and then—as soon as you find difficulties in the way—turn back! You say—just as Zacchæus might have said:—It is useless to try! No one can say I have not tried; but, you see, my case is peculiar. “I am little of stature,” and the crowd is great. This happiness cannot be meant for *me*. I find difficulties in myself—in my own character,—and a crowd of difficulties around me—in my circumstances. How can I help it? I cannot add one cubit unto my stature, nor send the crowd away. I cannot alter myself, or my circumstances. I give it up!

Stay! Is this what Zacchæus did? When he found he “could not” see Jesus where

he was, did he go home in despair? Or did he waste time in wishing that he were a tall man, or that the crowd would go away? No! (Read v. 4.) "He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree!"

But—how "odd" it must have looked! Natural enough, for a young boy; but he was no longer a boy. How was it that he cared so little for "appearance?"

How was it? I will tell you. Zacchæus was *in earnest!*

You must be in earnest, too. (Rev. iii. 15, 16.) If you really want to "see Jesus," you must be willing to take trouble, (Luke xi. 8—10; xviii. 1. Matt. xi. 12,) and even to seem "fools, for Christ's sake." (1 Cor. iv. 10. Song Sol. v. 9.)

I am speaking especially to those who are just beginning, for the first time, to wish that they could "see Jesus." But not to them, only.

You that have seen Him already, by faith, do not think all will be easy work in future. You will seldom get a real interview with

Jesus, without wrestling for it. Each fresh sight will cost you a fresh struggle. When you try to "see" Him, you will find your *soul* too "little of stature," and "the press" around you—of worldly cares and business and pleasures—too great. You will be tempted to give it up, and to comfort yourself by hoping you will "feel more inclined for prayer, to-morrow!"

Remember Zacchæus! He did not know so well as you do, how much a real sight of Jesus is worth. And yet, he did not give it up.

Imitate Zacchæus! Fight your way, as it were, through the "press," to the "sycamore tree." "Labouring fervently . . . in prayers" (Col. iv. 12) is a very different thing from "saying your prayers." And very different is the result. In the one case, you gain what Zacchæus would have gained if he had gone home after *one* effort to "see Jesus:"—*i. e., nothing!* In the other case, you gain what Zacchæus did,—a sight—yes, and more than a passing sight—of Jesus Himself!

From the first, and to the last,—as long as we “see Jesus” by faith only, it will cost an effort. Expect it. “Fore-warned, fore-armed!” We shall not find it easy work, to leave the crowd behind, and climb the “sycamore tree,” that there may be nothing and no one between our souls and Jesus.

But it is worth the effort! The Saviour will “manifest” Himself to us. (John xiv. 21.) We shall “see Jesus,” again and again;—more and more clearly. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” (Hosea vi. 3. Contrast Is. lxiv. 7, with Gen. xxxii. 24—30.)

We have seen what Zacchæus did; now let us see what Jesus did.

(V. 5.) “When Jesus came to the place” where Zacchæus was, did He know that Zacchæus was there? And who he was? And why he was there? Yes, He knew all about it. How quickly the Saviour sees those who want to see Him! (Compare John i. 38, 47, 48.) Whether “under the fig-tree,” or

in the "sycamore tree," or wherever any such may be hidden, they are "manifest in His sight." (Heb. iv. 13. Jer. xxxi. 18.)

By what name does our Lord address Zacchæus? He calls him by his name! "Zacchæus!" We start, if we hear ourselves called by name, in a crowd. It shows that some one is near, who knows us personally. Did our Lord know Zacchæus personally? (See—for similar instances—Gen. xvi. 8; xv. 1; xxii. 1; xxxv. 10. Ex. iii. 4; xxxiii. 12, 17. 1 Sam. iii. 6, 10. 1 Kings xix. 9. Luke x. 41. John xx. 16; xxi. 15—17.)

And does He know *us*, personally? (John x. 3, 14. 2 Tim. ii. 19.)

Had Jesus anything special to say to Zacchæus, or did He only call him by name to show that he was not forgotten? Remember, even this would have been reward enough for his pains. A token of special notice from one who is the centre of attraction to all—people do not think little of this, in earthly things. But Zacchæus was

to have more than this—much more! Read the words of Jesus Himself. What! Did He intend to honour Zacchæus with a personal visit at his own house, that very day?

And what does Jesus want to do, this very day, if *you* will but “open the door”—the double-locked door—of *your heart*? The same thing! “Abide at thy house!” (Read Rev. iii. 20.) Is it *true*? True—that He stands at the door, and knocks? True—that if you “open the door,” He will “come in?” True—that if He comes in, He will make you happy—“sup with” you, and let you sup with Him—enjoy real communion with Him—at once?—To-day?

What answer are you prepared to give? Will you keep Him waiting? Will you ask Him to “go, and come again” to-morrow, that you may get your house ready for Him meanwhile? Or—will you do what Zacchæus did, *i. e.*, hear His voice, and receive Him joyfully?

(V. 6.) See how instantly Zacchæus obeyed—and how exactly! “Make haste

and come down!"—"And he made haste and came down;" &c.

"Make haste!" In the name of Jesus I entreat you to "make haste!" (Ps. cxix. 60.) Your salvation may depend on it. (Prov. xxvii. 1. James iv. 14. Heb. iii. 13.) I cannot promise that Jesus will "come in" to-morrow, if you will not "open the door" to-day. But—in His name—I *can* promise that He will "come in" and "sup with" you "*to-day*, while it is called to-day," if you will make haste, and open the door to receive Him joyfully. (Read Rev. iii. 20 again. Heb. iv. 7.)

"To-day?"—some of you are saying in your hearts—"Must I not wait till my heart is more in a fit state to receive Christ? Would it not be presumption, to try and receive Him now?"

No! You must not wait. It would be "presumption" to think you could ever make your own heart "fit" for such a Guest. It never will be "fit" for Him to dwell in, till He has made it fit for Himself. He will

tell you how He likes everything arranged, when He is actually *in* "thy house." Do but "open the door!" Let angels say with rejoicing, what the neighbours of Zacchæus said with murmuring: "He is gone to be Guest with a man that is a sinner!"

That done, the rest will follow. The effect of His coming will soon make itself felt.

(V. 8.) Do we not see it here? We do not read that Jesus accused him of being an extortioner, or unjust, or covetous; and yet—"Zacchæus stood and said unto the Lord"—? ("Behold, Lord," &c.)

Sin cannot stand, in the Presence of Jesus. Zacchæus had already heard of Him with the hearing of the ear, but now his eye *sees* that holy Jesus, face to face; and his sins fall off, like Peter's chains in the presence of the angel. (See Job xlii. 5, 6. Acts xii. 7.)

Do you want sin to become hateful to you? Receive Christ into your heart! (See 1 Sam. v. 2—5. Luke xi. 21, 22.) Unless "Christ be in you," you are "*dead in sins.*" (Eph. ii. 5.) Now "the dead know

not anything;" (Ecc. ix. 5;) they know not that they are dead! And the "dead" *soul* is no more troubled by its own corruptions, than a dead body in the grave is troubled by corruption within and around. (1 Tim. v. 6. Luke xv. 13, 17, 24.) But when Christ comes into the soul, death and darkness change to life and light. (Eph. v. 14.) We see what sin is, when we see what Jesus is. (Luke v. 8.)

Do you want to conquer sin? *Realize* that Christ is "in you!" If you have already received Him, and thus learnt to hate sin,—if you are striving against sin—some besetting sin that often strives against you,—remember that "JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU!" (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) Speak to "the Sinner's Guest!" Tell Him what you feel and want. Tell Him that you are not worthy to be His dwelling-place; (John xiv. 23;) no more worthy than when He first came. Ask Him to abide with you still, as He came at first, though you are "a sinner!"

And then, take that sin which troubles

you, and look at it in the light of His countenance. Tell Him all about it. Say to Him: I know that Thou hatest it; Thou, Lord, knowest that I hate it too! Cast out the rebel! It is too strong for me; but not too strong for Thee! Thou art the Master here! (Ps. xix. 12.)

(Vv. 9, 10.) You will get an answer! "The Sinner's Guest" will "speak comfortably" to you, as he did to Zacchæus. (Hos. ii. 14.) He will remind you that salvation is come to your house;—that He is come to save you from your sins; (Matt. i. 21;) that you have a share in all the promises; (Gal. iii. 14, 29. 2 Cor. i. 20—22;) and that "Sin shall not have dominion over you," (Rom. vi. 14,) though it may struggle to the last.

He will say—and in your inmost heart you will hear it:—"THE SON OF MAN IS COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST!"



Lesson XXI.

"JESUS HIMSELF."—IN GETHSEMANE.

St. Luke xxii. 39—46.

THE country where Jesus lived and died is called "the Holy Land." It may well be called "holy!"

If you went back to a place where you had often been with some dear friend that you have now lost, would you not feel that place sacred? If you stood in the very room where you had watched his last breath, would you not like to be *alone* there? And if you could not be alone, but were obliged to be with people who knew and cared nothing for that dear friend of yours, and laughed and talked on the very spot where that friend had suffered, would it not be pain—deep pain—to you?

The LORD JESUS CHRIST has lived, and suffered, and died, on this earth of ours. A few weeks' journey, in these days of quick travelling, would take us to the very spot where He was born. HE—your Saviour, and mine!—your Friend, and mine!—was born at Bethlehem. Should we not feel it holy ground?—And then, Nazareth—where He spent the greater part of His life—those thirty years that we know so little of!—where He gained the name, “Jesus of Nazareth!” Should we not feel it holy ground?—And “the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done” after He left Nazareth—would not these also seem holy ground to us?

But *Gethsemane*? What shall we say of Gethsemane? If you had been travelling through “the Holy Land,” and found yourself among the olive trees of Gethsemane! . . . I think you would like to be *alone*. Or at least, if you must have some one with you, you would wish it to be some one who loved Jesus! You would like to kneel down

and pray silently. You would feel it was not a place for many words. It would be a place for many thoughts, but silent thoughts. And oh! what would you feel, if you heard other people laughing and talking, on such a spot as this?

You and I—in heart—are called to spend this hour in Gethsemane!

“Let us take our shoes from off our feet;

All here is holy ground.

No thoughtless hearts should enter where

Our suffering Lord is found!

With solemn thoughts and humble reverence, should we

Behold that awful scene in dark Gethsemane!”*

(V. 39.) “He *came out*, and went, as He was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him.” Where had He been, with His disciples? (V. 12.) Why had He gone to that “large upper room” with them? (Vv. 11, 13.) How many of the twelve apostles sat down

* From “The Story of Jesus in Verse.” *Hodder and Stoughton, Paternoster Row.*

with Him? (V. 14.) Judas among them? (V. 21.)

Supper—the Passover feast—being ended, the Lord Jesus “riseth,”—what to do? (John xiii. 4, 5.) Oh that all His disciples would “follow the example of His great humility,” and “wash one another’s feet!” (Vv. 12—17.) It is one of the many lessons of this holy Thursday evening.

When Jesus had taught this lesson, by example and precept, “He was troubled in spirit.” (John xiii. 21.)—The first pangs of His great Agony! “One of you shall betray Me,”—He says. “One of *you*—which eateth with Me!” (Mark xiv. 18. Ps. xli. 9; lv. 12, 13.) The thought seemed more than He could bear!

Which of “the twelve” was it? (John xiii. 26.) “He, then, *having received the sop*”—among the Jews this was a token of good-will and friendship—“*went immediately out.*” What to do? (To betray his Master!)

That last act of love on Jesus’ part did

"The benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament."

And "so is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily."

But is not the danger great, if we refuse to receive it at all? Turn to our own Communion Service, for the answer. Look at the Invitation which the Minister is to use, "in case he shall see the people negligent to come to the Holy Communion." Read it, slowly and carefully, at home this evening,—any of you that come to this Class, but do *not* come to the Lord's Supper. Pray over it honestly; "search the Scriptures"—from which these words are chiefly taken: and I think "you will, by God's grace, return to a better mind." You will resolve to obey the command of Jesus: "This do in remembrance of Me."

You will find help, after that, in the first Invitation: and in the Address to those who "mind" (*i.e.*, intend—have a mind "to come to the Holy Communion;" and

in other parts of our beautiful Communion Service. This will send you to the Holy Scriptures themselves; and they will send you to Jesus Himself. *Tell Him* what you feel and think about it; and He will tell you what He feels and thinks about it.

HE has not forgotten that night in which He was betrayed; He needs nothing to keep it in remembrance. But *we* do!

Before He "came out" to be "betrayed into the hands of sinners," He had provided more help and comfort still, for the disciples He was leaving. As soon as Judas "was gone out, Jesus said"—what did He say? (John xiii. 31.) And how much more? From that verse, to the end of ch. xvii! Remember, there is no reason to stop at the end of ch. xiii. You should sometimes read those "last words" of Jesus to His disciples, straight through; beginning with ch. xiii. 31, and ending with the last verse of ch. xvi. And after that, if you have time, read His last Prayer with them. (ch. xvii.)

We could ill spare those chapters out of our Bibles! Perhaps we love them much, as it is. But we shall love them still more, if we always keep two things in mind.

(1.) *When* were these words spoken—these loving words—to His disciples,—and *about* His disciples, to His Father? “The same night in which He was betrayed!” Do we not especially value any earthly friend’s thought of us, at a time when that friend is himself in trouble, or anxiety,—or at the point of death?

(2.) *To whom* were they spoken? To Judas? No. (John xiii. 31.) But (among others) to Peter, though Jesus knew that he would deny Him? Yes, Peter was there: and a verse we all love—“Let not your heart be troubled,” &c., (Ch. xiv. 1,)—comes directly after those words to Peter: “The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice!” Peter, and the other ten—who all “forsook Him and fled”—these were the disciples to whom Jesus spoke in this way! (Compare John xvi. 32, with xvii. 24.)

And now let us pass on to Gethsemane, with Jesus and His disciples.

"*When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth, with His (eleven) disciples.*" Where is He going? (John xviii. 1.) Had He ever been in this garden of Gethsemane with them before? Often? (V. 2.) Is that why Judas "knew the place" so well? Judas is missing now: but we know why! He will soon be here—with lanterns and torches to light up the darkness, and weapons to take Him prisoner.

But meanwhile, in the darkness and stillness, let us tarry here, and "watch" with Jesus. We cannot *understand*;—but He bids us draw near and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow!

(Return to St. Luke's Gospel.)

(V. 40.) On entering the garden, His first thought seems to be for—whom? (His disciples.) What did He tell them to do? To judge by their conduct, should you think they *did* "pray," as they were told to do?—Christ sees our need of prayer

oftener than we do. Temptation may be nearer than we think for. *Never resist an impulse to pray.* It is the Spirit of Christ, saying to you: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

According to St. Matthew's account, (xxvi. 36, 37,) how many of the eleven disciples did Jesus leave at the entrance of the garden, saying: "Sit ye here," &c.? (Eight.) "He took with Him"—further into the garden—how many? (Three.) Which three?—So also on "the holy mount;" and elsewhere. (See Lesson xviii.) Pray to be numbered among those who live *near* their Lord!

But were even those three—was *any one*—allowed to be quite close to Jesus, in His "AGONY?" No! To those three He presently said (as He had before said to the other eight): "Tarry ye here!" (Matt. xxvi. 38. Mark xiv. 34.)

And then, "He went a little *farther*:" (Matt. xxvi. 39 :)—"He was *withdrawn* from them about a stone's cast." (Luke xxii. 41.)

He was alone!

Alone,—in body! No earthly friend to hold His right hand, saying, "Fear not!"

Alone,—in mind! No other mind to meet His, and understand it—or even try to understand it!

Alone,—in soul! No one able to read the thoughts that passed between His human soul and God!

Alone—more truly than any of *you* have ever felt—more truly than *any* human body and mind and soul has ever been—was Jesus in His Agony!

Yet we are allowed to know the words He said! Read them—softly!—slowly! (V. 42.) He is speaking to a "Father!" Turn to Matt. vi. 6, 26, 32; vii. 11. See what Jesus had taught other people to expect from God as a "Father!" That Father is "able to save Him from death." (Heb. v. 7.) Can He refuse His petition?

What is the petition? "Remove this cup from Me!"

But "oh! how thankful we should be,
This was not *all* His Prayer!"

He begins with: "Father, *if* THOU be willing;" He ends with—lest even *that* should fall short of giving up His own Will entirely:—"Not my Will, but Thine, be done."

Wonderful Saviour! Thy Name is "Wonderful!" (Is. ix. 6.) Thy Love is Wonderful!

But for this, where had our Salvation been?

Was His Prayer answered? (Heb. v. 7.) Yes. He was "*heard*." God the Father sent an angel to Him from Heaven. But what was that angel's message? Was the cup to be removed from Him? Or was He to be strengthened to drink it?

Angels had often been sent with messages from Heaven. To Daniel, and to Zacharias, they had been sent to say: Your petition is granted. (Dan. ix. 23. Luke i. 13.)

But what was the work given to this angel? Most wonderful and awful of all

work ever given to an angel of God!
“*Strengthening Him!*” “Strengthening Him”—to drink the cup which could not be taken away from Him! “Strengthening” the Son of God to bear His agony!

.

I will only *read* what follows:

“And being in an Agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His Sweat was as it were great drops of Blood falling down to the ground.”

We cannot *speak* of this.—Let us turn it into prayer.

“O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!”

“O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!”

“By Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat, Good Lord, deliver us!”

(V. 45.) More than once—as we find if we compare this with the other Gospels,—He went back to His three disciples. He found them “sleeping!” (The tender excuse

is made for them—"sleeping for sorrow!"—Again and again He left them to their sleep, and returned to the Agony of Prayer. It was "the travail of His soul!"

One more last struggle—last giving up of His human Will—"Thy Will be done!" Matt. xxvi. 42, 44)—and the Saviour is ready for His last act of Love.

"The Son of Man is betrayed—to be crucified!"

"O Love of God! O Sin of Man!
In this dread act your strength is tried!
And victory remains with Love:
For He, our Love, is crucified!"

"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My Life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." (John x. 17, 18. See 1 John iii. 16 ; iv. 16, 19.)

GETHSEMANE! We have spent this hour with Jesus in Gethsemane! Shall we forget it? God forbid!

" My God ! my God ! and can it be
That I should sin so lightly now,
And think no more of evil thoughts
Than of the wind that waves the bough ?

" I sin, and heaven and earth go round,
As if no dreadful deed were done ;
As if God's Blood had never flowed
To hinder sin, or to atone.

" I walk the earth with lightsome step,
Smile at the sunshine, breathe the air,
Do my own will, nor ever heed
Gethsemane and Thy long Prayer !

" Shall it be always thus, O Lord ?
Wilt thou not work this hour in me
The Grace Thy Passion merited,
Hatred of self and love of Thee ?

" Ever—when tempted—make me see,
Beneath the olive's moon-pierced shade,
My God, alone, outstretched, and bruised,
And bleeding,—on the earth He made !

" And make me feel it was *my* sin,
As though no other sins there were,
That was, to Him Who bears the world,
A load that *He* could hardly bear !"

" YE THAT LOVE THE LORD, HATE EVIL !"

LESSON XXII.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—CRUCIFIED FOR US.

St. Luke xxiii. 32—49.

It is a solemn thing to see any one die.

"Oft as the bell, with solemn toll,
Speaks the departure of a soul,
Let each one ask himself, Am I
Prepared, should I be called to die?"

"For that is the end of all men," except those "which are alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord." (Ecc. vii. 2. Heb. ix. 27. 1 Thess. iv. 15—17.)

And yet, though a solemn thing, it is not altogether sad, for a Christian, to see a Christian die. Death has no "sting," to the believer in Jesus. (1 Cor. xv. 55—57.)

He has "Peace at the last," though Satan may try to take it away;—peace, amidst suffering and weakness; "peace—in believing." (Ps. xxxvii. 37. Is. xxvi. 3; John xvi. 33; xiv. 27. Rom. xv. 13.)

"I may tremble on the Rock, but the Rock can never tremble under me," said one dying child of God. "You see a poor wreck, but Christ is on board, and the wreck is safe," said another.

And often, "the God of Hope" fills the soul with such "joy"—as well as "peace," in believing, that the "Everlasting Joy"—so soon to begin,—seems to have begun already, and we find ourselves called to "rejoice with them that do rejoice," rather than to "weep with them that weep."

"Such the prospects that arise
To the dying Christian's eyes!
Such the glorious vista, Faith
Opens through the shades of Death

"Only think!—In a quarter of an hour!—"
were the dying words of a girl who had no friend but Christ beside her; though another,

dying "without Christ,"—that same night, in that same "ward,"—was crying out: "I can't die! I *will* not die!" Such was the first night's experience of a Hospital nurse! And such are the things we often see or hear of ourselves.

"O Death, where is thy sting?" Where,—to the believer in Jesus? "The sting of death is"—? ("Sin.") And where is the believer's sin?

Where?—Thank God, *we know* where! (Is. liii. 6. Lev. xvi. 15, 20—22, 30, 34. Heb. ix. 7, 11—14, 22—28; x. 3—10.) We know "Who—His own Self—bare our sins, in His own Body, on the tree!" (1 Pet. ii. 24.) We know Whose Blood "cleanseth us from all sin!" (1 John i. 7.)

"I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up to the CROSS, his burden loosed from off his shoulders! . . . Then was Christian glad, . . . and said: 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His Death!' Then he stood still awhile, to look and wonder."

Like him, let us stand still, to look and wonder. Let us in heart draw near to the Cross of Christ to-day. Let us stand where His Mother and His Mother's sister stood, during those awful hours—"by the Cross of Jesus." (John xix. 25.)

And oh ! whether for the first time or not, may we learn—in some measure—*what we owe to* "the precious Blood of Christ!"—May we *realize* "the exceeding great Love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious Blood-shedding He hath obtained to us!"

We must stand here *reverently*. For if it is a solemn thing to see any one die, what is it to see the Saviour die ?

We must stand here *humbly*. For we are sinners—the sinners whose sins He was bearing. "He was made sin for *us*." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

We must stand here *thankfully*. For the work is "finished." The Sacrifice on

Calvary was "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." Salvation is within our reach; and we owe it to the Death of Jesus!

We must stand here *prayerfully*. For unless the Spirit of God be our Teacher, we shall be unmoved—hard—careless,—under the very shadow of the Cross! And we shall go home, after "watching Jesus" (Matt. xxvii. 54)—"evidently set forth, crucified," before our eyes, (Gal. iii. 1,) to crucify Him again, by our sins!

"To hear the sorrows Thou hast felt,
Dear Lord, an adamant would melt!
But I can read each moving line,
And nothing move this heart of mine!

"Eternal Spirit, mighty God!
Do Thou *apply* the Saviour's Blood!
For 'tis Thy work, and Thine alone,
To move and melt this heart of stone!"

In our last "Lesson," we tried to follow our Lord to Gethsemane: and there we saw Him "betrayed into the hands of sinners."

(Matt. xxvi. 45.) This took place on the Thursday evening.

All through that dreadful night, our holy Saviour was passed on roughly from one sinner to another. From Judas, to the officers and men sent by Caiaphas; from them, to Caiaphas himself; from Caiaphas to Pilate; from Pilate to Herod; and from Herod to Pilate again. At last, early on the Friday morning, "Pilate, willing to content the people, . . . delivered Jesus,—when he had scourged Him,—to be crucified." (Mark xv. 15.)

"They took Jesus, and led Him away." (John xix. 16.) Whither? (John xix. 17, 18, 20.)—"Nigh to the city;" why not *in* the city? (Heb. xiii. 11—13.)

(V. 32.) "Two other," (who, unlike the holy Jesus, were) "malefactors," receiving the "due reward" of their deeds, were "led with Him to be put to death."

(V. 33. "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary,—there"—there—the most fearful sin that ever stained

this earth was committed!—"there"
Can you go on?

Would it not be better for *you*—if our "Lesson" might end here? — if your "Teacher" were silent altogether—if we were to read the Story of the CROSS in silence,—as told us here, and in the other three Gospels, and in Isaiah's prophetic Gospel? (Ch. liii.) Or would it not, at least, be better, if the earthly Teacher's voice should not be heard, except to *read* these holy records;—slowly, and pausing long between each verse, that a better Teacher may speak to us all, and we may hear no voice but His?

The whole subject is so deep—so awful!—fitter for thoughts than for words!—I want to look and listen, with you, rather than speak to you. On such a subject, I cannot "teach" you. We must all be learners, together, as we stand "by the Cross of Jesus!"

If I *must* speak, it shall be to say: Listen!

Come, and listen, with me, to the dying words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Seven times He spoke—seven words of Love!
And all three hours His Silence cried
For mercy on the souls of men.
Jesus, our Love, is crucified!”

Let our hearts be silent, in that holy “Silence.” Let our hearts listen to those “Seven Words of Love.”

I. “FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO!” (V. 34.)

Is it thus, that He speaks of His murderers? “Father, forgive them!” He had already forgiven them Himself.

“They know not what they do.”—Excusing them! Covering their sin! “Love covereth all sins.” (Prov. x. 12.) Was ever Love like His? “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father!” (John v. 45.)

See another instance of this sin-covering Love, in Matt. xxvi. 41; last clause.—

Lest perhaps they should be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," (2 Cor. ii. 7,) after falling into temptation!

See it again in John xvii. No mention of their many failings!

See it once more in Heb. vii. 23—25. (Read carefully; observe marginal reading, and context.) Thank God that it is true—"to the uttermost"—to this day—"evermore!" "He ever liveth to make intercession for us;"—for *us*, "the transgressors," (Is. liii. 12,) who, by our sins, have crucified Him!

"His powerful Blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the Throne."

(Vv. 35—38.) We cannot linger over these verses. Fearfully and literally, they are the fulfilment of Ps. xxii. 6—8, 16, 17. "They pierced My hands" . . . ; and *then*—"they look and *stare* upon Me!"—There are times when we hide our face even from ourselves—in solitude!—when in heart-sorrow; or when we feel God more than usually near.

(See Is. vi. 2. Ex. iii. 6.)—He *could* not hide His Face!

II. (V. 43.) “VERILY I SAY UNTO THEE, TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.”

Blessed words! Who could wish for more, than to hear such words themselves? To be “with Christ”—“in Paradise”—“to-day!” “Far better” than all that we can ask or think besides! (Phil. i. 23.)

To whom—of all that multitude—are these blessed words spoken? To His Mother? (How gladly would she have heard them!) To “the disciple standing by, whom He loved?” No!—To whom, then? To one of “the thieves . . . which were crucified with Him!”

The last sinner that turned to Him—“in no wise cast out!” The last petition made to Him—how abundantly granted! “Mighty to save,” though “crucified through weakness!” (Is. lxiii. 1. 2 Cor. xiii. 4.) Reading the heart of the penitent

who had no time to prove his penitence, beyond that dying hour!—Granting Life Eternal to the dying man, when a Dying Man Himself!

Six hours later, and Jesus had gone before him into “Paradise.”—But when evening had come, the forgiven sinner was “with” his Saviour!—Truly, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance!” (1 Tim. i. 15.)

(We cannot be *certain* as to the order in which these “Seven Sayings” are to be read. Study the four Gospels, and think for yourselves. But this is a minor point. Think of the “Seven Sayings” themselves!)

III. “WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON!”
“BEHOLD THY MOTHER!” (John xix. 26, 27.)

What Jesus meant, we see by what “that disciple” did. “From that hour, that disciple took her unto his own home.” As a

child, Jesus Himself had nestled on her breast; and since then, John had leaned on His. These two must have been nearest and dearest on earth, to His human Heart. He will give them to each other, before He dies! What comfort so great, in that desolate hour, as to be *trusted*—with work so sacred—treasures so precious? Unselfish to the last, the dying Saviour could thus think and plan for others.

Who knows how to “bind up the broken-hearted,” and “comfort all that mourn,” so well as Jesus Himself? He was “a Man of Sorrows:”—“acquainted with grief!” (Is. lxi. 1—3; liii. 3.)

The three first of these “Seven Sayings on the Cross” have been “Words of Love” indeed;—Love—for His own people—Love, for the penitent sinner—Love, for His very murderers!

And all the rest also are “Words of Love.” For remember, when you hear the cry of *agony*,—“All this He suffered for you and for me!”

IV. "MY GOD! MY GOD! WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Matt. xxvii. 46. Mark xv. 34.)

The other three Sayings had most likely been spoken in a low voice; but this time—after the three hours' darkness—"He cried with a loud voice!" Before all that crowd of heartless lookers-on, He confessed Himself "forsaken" by God! Sinners are to hear it. We must stand trembling, to listen and to learn.—"Why" had God "forsaken" that "Beloved Son, in Whom" He was "well pleased?" (Matt. iii. 17. John viii. 29; xiv. 31; xv. 10.)

Why? Your life, and mine, during one single day, is answer enough! "All we, like sheep, have gone astray: we have turned every one—to his *own* way; and the Lord hath laid on HIM the iniquity of *us all!*" (Is. liii. 6.) He was "made a curse—for *us!*" "He was made Sin—for *us!*" "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sin of the world!" (Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 21. John i. 29.)

V. "I THIRST!" (John xix. 28.)

One prophecy—one single prophecy—was left—not yet fulfilled by His Sufferings. (Ps. lxix. 21. See Luke xxiv. 44—46.) And rather than leave that one Scripture unfulfilled, He owns the thirst that was consuming Him, before the mocking crowd. "Faithful to Him that appointed Him!" (Heb. iii. 2.) Faithful in Life—faithful unto Death!

But oh! how shall words utter it?—these are "the *pains* of Death"—these are the last Agonies of our Most Holy Redeemer! The Agony of Mind, He has confessed already; the Agony of Body he must needs confess also. "I thirst!"—Destitute, afflicted, tormented,—"behold the *Man*"—"the Man Christ Jesus!"

"Behold the Lamb of God!"—"His Life is taken from the earth;" (Acts viii. 33;)—but not by one merciful stroke, as with Jewish sacrifices. (Deut. xxi. 4.) No! HE—"the Lamb of God"—must "*overcome* the *sharpness* of Death." "Christ must

suffer!" It was a Death of shame, and of lingering torment—"the Death of the Cross." He did not die by the soldier's spear!

"O Sinner, mark, and ponder well,
Sin's awful condemnation:
Think what a Sacrifice it cost
To purchase thy salvation!"

"By Thy Cross and Passion,
Good Lord, deliver us!"

VI. "IT IS FINISHED!" (John xix. 30.)
Believest thou this? Was it true, eighteen hundred years ago? Is it true, now? Repeat it again. Tell it to *me*!—it is like "cold waters to a thirsty soul!" And let me tell it to *you*—tell—not explain it;—no words can make it clearer to your *mind*, and God alone can make it clear to your *heart*;—let me tell it to you once more: "It is finished!"

"Hark! the voice of Love and Mercy
Sounds aloud from Calvary:
See, it rends the rocks asunder,
Shakes the earth, and veils the sky!
'It is finished!'
Hear the dying Saviour cry.

"It is finished! oh! what pleasure
Do the wondrous words afford!
Heavenly blessings, without measure,
Flow to us from Christ the Lord.
'It is finished!'
Saints, His dying words record."

VII. FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COM-
MEND MY SPIRIT." (V. 46.)

The work is "finished," and "the Arm
of the Lord" may rest.

"He gave up the ghost." "He laid
down His Life." (1 John iii. 16.) No man
took it from Him; He laid it down of
Himself. (John x. 15, 17, 18.) "The hour
was come"—and the moment—"when He
should depart out of this world unto the
Father:" and He "yielded up the ghost"—
"the human spirit"—into that Father's
Hands.

. "The soul that seemed
Forsaken, feels her present God again,
And in her Father's arms
Contented dies away."

"He hath poured out His Soul—unto
DEATH!" (Is. liii. 12.)

Look up once more ! Look at your crucified Redeemer !

“ Death’s pallid hue comes o’er Thee,
The glow of Life decays !
Yet angel hosts adore Thee,
And tremble as they gaze,”

Hush ! . . . We are in the presence of—DEATH !

“The sufferings of Christ” are over. No pain can reach Him now. The cruel spear cannot hurt Him ; for He is—“ dead already.” (John xix. 33, 34.) It can but show us—for our eternal comfort—the Life-Blood of Atonement ! (Lev. xvii. 11.)

“Life for life”—“The Just for the unjust !” (1 Pet. iii. 18.) “He was wounded for *our* transgressions ; . . . and with HIS stripes *we* are healed.” (Is. liii. 5—8.) “We have Redemption, through His Blood ;”—we have “Peace, through the Blood of His Cross !” (Col. i. 14, 20.)

The Story of the Cross is no idle tale. It is “the Story of Salvation”—“the Story

of Peace." "In weakness and in fear," I have told it. "Not with wisdom of words!"

But Jesus Himself has said:

"I, IF I BE LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME!" (John xii. 32; iii. 14—18.)

"The Love of Christ constraineth us!" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) "He loved *me*, and gave HIMSELF for *me*!" (Gal. ii. 20.) What then?

"Here, Lord, I give *myself* away!
'Tis all that I can do!"



LESSON XXIII.

“JESUS HIMSELF”—“RISEN FROM THE DEAD.”

St. Matt. xxviii. 1—10.

Is this a true story? If it were *not* true, what then? (Read 1 Cor. xv. 14—19.) We could have no sure hope of Eternal Life, and we should be “of all men most miserable!”

We will return to this part of the subject presently. Meanwhile, let us go through the story itself.

(Ch. xxvii. 60.) On the Friday evening, the Body of Jesus, bearing those marks of dreadful suffering from head to foot, had been laid in Joseph’s “own new tomb.”

(V. 63.) But what had Jesus said, “while He was yet alive?” (“After three days I will rise again.”)

Do the disciples seem to have "remembered His words," at this time? Or, not till after His Resurrection? Luke xxiv. 6—8, 44. John ii. 18—22; xx. 9.)

Yet His enemies remembered, what His friends forgot! "Sir, we remember," &c. And did they think it of importance?

In this, they were right. Everything depends upon it. If true, it is the best truth of all—that "He is risen from the dead." (V. 64.) If an "error," it is "worse than" any other that could be preached or believed as to "that deceiver." For it is the seal of all the rest.

So they went to Pilate, saying?—"Command that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day."

(V. 65.) What did Pilate answer? ("Ye have a watch;" &c.) A guard of Roman soldiers was at their disposal: they might give their own orders.

"As sure as ye can!" Perhaps he had his doubts:—was Jesus really a "deceiver?" (See Luke xxiii. 13—15. John xviii. 33—38;

xix. 4—13.) Might not His words come true? If possible, it must be prevented; (see Mark vi. 14, 16;) but—*was* it possible? “Make it *as sure as ye can!*”

(V. 66.) “So they went, and made the sepulchre *sure*”—quite “*sure*,” as they thought! How? (By “sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”)

This was on the Saturday.

That day passed quietly. No disciples came to steal the body of Jesus. If only His enemies had known how little faith and courage had been left in the disciples’ hearts since Jesus died, I think they would not have been afraid of the Body being stolen, and the Resurrection being preached! But it is a good thing they did *not* know. If they had known, they would not have taken such pains to make the sepulchre “*sure*.” And then, we should not have felt so certain that Jesus rose again. (See Ps. lxxvi. 10. Acts iv. 25—28.)

Now let us see what came of all their pains!

(Ch. xxviii. 1.) Early next morning, who were at the grave? (Compare Mark xvi. 1, 2.)

(V. 2.) But when they got there, they found that strange things had happened. There had been "a great"—? ("Earthquake.") The stone set to make the sepulchre "sure," had been shaken out of its place, and "rolled away"—as if it had been a little pebble!—though "it was very great." (Mark xvi. 3, 4.) And now, instead of shutting the Master in, that great stone was being used as a seat for His servant, "the angel of the Lord!"

(V. 3.) The angel who had "rolled away" the stone so easily,—for the angels "excel in strength," (Ps. ciii. 20,) — was only a *servant* of the risen Lord. Yet what do we read of him? ("His countenance was like lightning," &c.) We could not even have *looked* at him for many minutes! What will it be to see "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," of these glorious angels? (Rev. v. 11.)

And what will it be, to see the "Master"
Himself? (Rev. i. 17.)

"That blessed interview, how sweet!
To fall, transported, at His feet!
To see heaven's shining hosts around,
Each with celestial glory crowned!"

(V. 4.) How did the soldiers on guard bear the sight of this angel?—They had been sent to guard the body of a dead man, as they thought: but now, they are more like "dead men" themselves, while their Prisoner is alive and gone, and the Prisoner's servant is dazzling them with his glory!

(V. 5.) But if these strong men trembled, how much more those weak women!—Not so; the angel has a message for them. Read it. ("Fear not ye," &c.)

Why were they not to fear? ("I know that ye seek Jesus.")

Lay this verse to heart, you that "seek Jesus." "I *know* that ye seek Jesus,"—some of you. I *hope* that *many* of you do. "Fear not ye!" Sooner or later—

here or elsewhere—"ye *shall* find" Him. (Matt. vii. 7, 8.) Look on for a moment to the end of this story. Did not these women "find" Him whom they were seeking? (Yes. Vv. 7, 9.) And see how much *more* they find, than they had been seeking! They seek—a dead Saviour—"among the dead." (Luke xxiv. 5.) They find—a living Saviour—among the living. (V. 7.)

(V. 6.) But at first, the angel's message did not sound promising. "Ye seek Jesus; . . . He is not here!"—"Not here?" Have they come in vain?—No! What is said next? *Why* is He "not here?" ("He is risen, as He said.")

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay." See, it is empty! "He is *not here*."

(V. 7.) But where is He?—How shall the women make sure that the rest of the message is true—that Jesus "is risen, as He said?" Does the angel tell them where to find Him?

On their way to Galilee, what were they to do? (To "tell His disciples," &c.) Why?

I think it was,—to help them to believe the good news themselves!—not only to let the disciples know. (See Prov. xi. 25.)

If you want to believe any truth that you find in the Bible, more firmly than you now do,—if you are saying in your heart: “I know it is true, but it is not *real* to me, as it is to some people,”—take this verse (v. 7) home with you, and act on it. “Go quickly, and tell” — tell somebody else! “Faith cometh by hearing.” (Rom. x. 17.) And I find it grows by telling! “You have told that story till you believe it yourself,” is sometimes said to a person whose word is not trusted. Tell “the Truth” — “till you believe it yourself!”

(V. 8.) “They departed quickly.” Had they not been told to “go quickly?” So they obeyed:—“they did *run* to bring His disciples word.”

If you mean to go on your Lord’s errands at all, “Go quickly.” Do not trifle with the holy impulses God’s Spirit gives you. Act on them while you have them. “Say not unto

thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give." (Prov. iii. 27, 28.) Do him "good,"—whether in soul, or body,—"when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." The "power"—or the wish—may be gone "to-morrow,"—gone for ever! (Proy. xxvii. 1. Heb. iii. 13.) "Go, work to-day." (Matt. xxi. 28.) Make haste, and delay not. (Ps. cxix. 60.)

(V. 9.) "And as they went to tell His disciples," who met them? Jesus Himself!

Observe: it was "*as they went.*" They were already "on the way," to give the message entrusted to them. They had set out "quickly," and come—thus far—"quickly." And "behold, Jesus met them."

"Happy, who so Christ's Word convey,
That He may meet them on the way."

If they had delayed in setting out, or loitered on the road, they might not have met Him so soon.—Those who delay obedience, delay their own blessings. Do not delay *telling what you know* about Jesus. He may meet

.you before you actually give the message. Only be "on the way!"

Many Sunday School Teachers find this true. When they actually meet their classes, they have *more to tell*, than when they began to "prepare the lesson;" for Jesus Himself has met them "on the way." They had only intended to repeat the message, as given them by the "angel:" but He reveals Himself afresh to them, and they can say, as they repeat it:—"That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you;" (1 John i. 3, 5;) we do not give the 'message' at second-hand; 'for we have heard Him ourselves!'" (John iv. 42.)

Notice another point. The Master did *more* than the servant had promised in His Name. (Compare vv. 7, 9.) His servant (the angel) had pointed to Galilee, and said: "*There* shall ye see Him." And "behold, Jesus met them," before they got to Galilee!

Do you think any servant of Christ can lead you to expect too much from Christ

Himself? "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of *angels*," I could not do it!

"O Hope of every contrite heart!
To penitents, how kind!
To those who seek, how good Thou art!
But what—to those who find?"

"Ah! this no tongue can utter! This
No mortal pen can show!
The Love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know!"

(V. 9.) "They came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him." No wonder! We should have done the same ourselves.

And some of us, by faith, have done it already. We know it all by heart! We *know what it is*—to "seek the Saviour, fearing much, and knowing little:"—to meet His servants, and get the message of comfort from them: "Fear not: ye seek Jesus; He is risen; go, and tell others that He is risen; and ye shall see Him." We *know what it is*—to go on our way, cheered and strengthened by that message, trying to believe in a living Saviour, and to tell

others the little we know of Him ourselves. And—though we cannot put it into words—*we know what it is—to meet* “Jesus Himself!” All we can say is, that we “came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him!” We “held Him, and would not let Him go!” (Song Sol. iii. 4.)

(V. 10.) What does He say? He repeats the angel's message: “Be not afraid! Go, tell, &c. . . . There shall they see Me.” But—He alters one word. The angel had said: “Go, tell His”—? (“Disciples.”) But when Jesus Himself speaks of them, “He is not ashamed to call them”—? (“Brethren!” Heb. ii. 11, 12.)

Again we see it—and we cannot learn it too often:—JESUS HIMSELF is better than all *descriptions* of Jesus!

And—one thought more—all glimpses of Jesus on the way are as nothing, compared with the everlasting sight of Jesus at the end of our journey!

“THERE SHALL THEY SEE ME!”

Not on the mountains of Galilee, (v. 16,)

shall His people meet Him now! But—in “the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem,” (Rev. iii. 12,)—“*there* shall they see” Him!—“They shall see His Face, and His Name shall be in their foreheads.” (Rev. xxii. 4.)

“THERE SHALL THEY SEE ME!” For “I am He which liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore! AMEN!” (Rev. i. 18.)

“What shall we then say to these things?” Is it *true* that “Jesus died, and rose again?” (1 Thess. iv. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 1—8.)

What then? God’s Word shall give the answer.

I. Your debt is paid.

Compare 1 Cor. xv. 17, with Rom. iv. 25. “He was delivered *for our offences*.” At the Cross of Christ, we learn what Sin is;—its guilt, and its punishment, as borne by our “Surety.” But “He was raised again *for our justification*.” Where shall we learn the Pardon of sin, so well as at the empty

And yet, it is true! It is all true! Often say to yourself: "I *believe* in the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life of the world to come!" "As sure as Death," is the Resurrection of the dead!

What then?

"Embrace,—and ever hold fast,—that blessed hope of Everlasting Life, which God has given us in Jesus Christ our Lord."

1. Embrace it.

You know the way! Remember Rom. iv. 25, &c., as already quoted; and John iii. 14—16. 1 John v. 11, 12. "Lay hold on Eternal Life!" (1 Tim. vi. 12.)

2. Hold it fast.

Hold it fast, when Satan accuses you. Take "the shield of faith." (Eph. vi. 16.) Point to the Cross, and then to the Grave,—the empty Grave,—and say: "Get thee behind me, Satan! Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!" (Rom. viii. 33; v. 8—10.)

Hold it fast, when the World and the Flesh tempt you, saying: "Let us eat and

drink, for to-morrow we die." (1 Cor. xv. 32.) No; to-morrow we do *not* "die." But—we may be in Eternity to morrow. (James iv. 13, 14.)

Hold it fast, when those you love have gone away to be "with Christ," and you feel desolate. You may weep, for "Jesus wept." (John xi. 35.) But not "as others which have no hope." "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again," &c. (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.)

Hold it fast, when the burden of the flesh is heavy, and drags down the willing spirit. (Matt. xxvi. 41. 2 Cor. v. 2, 4.) We shall be rid of the burden ere long!—"unclothed;"—"absent from the body." And when the Day dawns, and we are "clothed upon"—"at home in the body" once more,—it will be "a spiritual body." (Phil. iii. 20, 21. 1 Cor. xv. 42—49.)

Hold it fast, when tempted to grow "weary in well-doing." Think of the Resurrection! "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 30—32, 58.) "To him that

soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." (Prov. xi. 18.) "Thou shalt be recompensed"—oh! how abundantly!—"at the Resurrection of the just." (Luke xiv. 14. Heb. x. 23—25, 35, 36. Matt. xxv. 34—36. Rev. xiv. 13.)

And hold it fast—"that blessed hope of Everlasting Life!"—in the hour of Death itself. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,"—our flesh may "see corruption" "before the Lord come." But it shall "rest in hope"—"in sure and certain hope—of the Resurrection to Eternal Life, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

For these are the words of the Lord Jesus Himself: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth, and believeth in Me, shall never die!" (John xi. 25, 26.)

Stay—let me give you the rest of the Message,—in His own words:

"BELIEVEST THOU THIS?"

LESSON XXIV.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—APPEARING TO THOMAS.

St. John xx. 24—29.

Do you not think St. Thomas must have been a happy man, when he *saw* Jesus, and believed?

And yet,—not so happy as you and I may be, if, though we "have *not* seen," we "believe," and "have Life through His Name." (V. 29.)

Why was this story "written?" (V. 31, with Rom. x. 17.) God grant that—for *us*,—it may not have been written in vain!

(V. 24.) "Thomas . . . was not with them *when Jesus came*." When was that? ("The same day, at evening." V. 19.)—"The *same* day;"—*i.e.*, the very day on which He rose from the dead!

How soon!—Why did He come so soon? For the sake of His disciples?—Or—for His own sake?—For *both*!

(1.) For their sakes.

How pleased we are, if a friend who has been away comes to see us, on returning, “the same day!” It seems so kind! *Two* visits, the day after, would not be worth so much to us.

And this,—even if we have not been really anxious about that friend. Much more, if we have no news of him, and thought he was dead, and we should never see him again!

And did not the disciples think they would never see their Master again—in this life? Yes;—and He knew it! He knew that those hours from the Thursday night to this Sunday evening—had seemed like *years* to them! For Jesus does not measure the hours of our life by the ticking of the clock, but by the beating of our hearts.

He knew their *outward* life during those long hours;—how they were despised and rejected, like their Master. When he found

the doors "shut" where the disciples were assembled, He was not surprised. He knew the reason why.

And He knew their *inner* lives, too. He knew just where, in each heart, the common trial pressed upon them the hardest—in what way that trial brought *temptation* to each separate soul, according to their different characters.

Other people only know our trials from the *outside*. And sometimes, a very pretty looking cottage is uncomfortable enough to live in! But Jesus knows our trials from the *inner* side;—*i. e.*, as they really are—not as they look. Read Ps. xxxi. 7; cxlii. 3: and mark the words "considered"—"known"—"overwhelmed within me."

So Jesus came "the same day," for *their* sakes. He would not delay longer than need be. A kindness delayed, is often a kindness lost. (See Prov. iii. 27, 28; as quoted in last Lesson.)

"O Lord, make speed to save us!

O Lord, make haste to help us!"

(2.) But Jesus came "the same day," *for His own sake*, too.

This thought is worth much to us. For which do you value most,—a visit from a friend who comes out of pity or kindness to *you*, or from one who comes because he loves to come—wants to come—cannot keep away? And Jesus came because He could not keep away! He loved those disciples! (John xiii. 1.) He loved them "without dissimulation." (Rom. xii. 9.) He loved them "in deed and in truth." (1 John iii. 18.) So He acted on the holy *impulse* of a loving heart,—in coming to His disciples that "same day."

When He came, what was the first thing He said to them? ("Peace be unto you!" V. 19.) And the second—? ("Peace be unto you!" V. 21.) Twice over!

He had given them His "Peace," not long before. How long before? Only on the Thursday evening. (Ch. xiv. 27.)

But had not something happened since then, to disturb that peace?—What *does*

disturb peace? Sorrow may; and sin *must*,—except in a soul that has never had the true peace of God, or that has wandered very far away.—And had the disciples had both sorrow and sin, since that Thursday evening?

Sorrow?—Yes, and deep sorrow! For they loved their Master, though they served Him badly.

And sin?—What sin? (Mark xiv. 50.) And one of them had not only forsaken, but denied Him, with cursing and swearing. (Mark xiv. 71.) The rest had not done this; but then, they had not had the Saviour's look of pardoning love, as Peter had. So they all needed to hear the word once more, "Peace be unto you." Jesus knew this; so He said it twice over; both before and after "He showed them His hands and His side."

If you have never had peace, or if you have had it, and lost it again, what must you do? Go to the risen Jesus! The peace of yesterday is not enough for to-day. Straight

to Jesus! Remind Him that He said "Peace be unto you," twice over, on His Resurrection-Day; thank Him for so doing; and ask Him to say the same to you. Not once for all, but—*as often as you need it*, claim the Promise in Matt. xi. 28.

(V. 20.) "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."—No wonder! You little know what it is to be glad, if you do not know what it is to see Jesus by faith, and feel Him near.

"JESUS! JESUS! Let me name Thee
O'er and o'er—Thou wilt not blame me!
'Tis my greatest comfort here,
Just to whisper in Thine ear,
'Thou art near, O Lord!'"

(V. 24.) "But . . . one of the twelve . . . was not with them when Jesus came." Who was the missing one? (Thomas.)

Did the other disciples tell him all about it? But, of course, that could not come to the same thing, as if he had seen Jesus Himself. He must have been sorely disappointed, to have missed such a visit!

But he was worse than disappointed. He does not say he is glad the others have seen Him, and he hopes he shall do so himself before long;—no:—what does he say? (V. 25.)—He does not believe the others have seen Him at all! In vain they tell him that the Lord “showed them His hands and His side,” with such marks as none but the Crucified could have shown. He thinks they are deceiving him, or have deceived themselves; it could only have been a “vision;”—not flesh and blood, that could be *handled* as well as seen. (Luke xxiv. 39.) Nothing would have satisfied *him*, he thinks, but touching and handling; and nothing less, he says, shall ever satisfy him now!

The faith of the other disciples was weak enough. But his was weaker still. He asked for stronger proofs than they had needed; and yet he had heard the report of more witnesses than the others had.

But even weak faith is “precious faith,” in the Saviour’s eyes. “Smoking flax shall

He not quench." (Is. xlii. 3.) He does not say to the "weary and heavy-laden," Walk on by yourselves till you get strong enough to bear your own burden!—but—? ("Come unto Me," &c. Matt. xi. 28.)

Jesus had heard what Thomas said. He knew what Thomas felt. He knew that Thomas really wanted to believe, and would gladly have those doubts set at rest. So, as Thomas could not "come unto" HIM, (for he did not know where to find his Lord,) Jesus comes to Thomas!—"The Lord is very pitiful!" (James v. 11.) "Always more ready to hear than we to pray, and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve!"

"Was there ever kindest Shepherd
Half so gentle, half so sweet,
As the Saviour Who would have us
Come and gather round his feet?"

"There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in Heaven:
There is no place where earth's failings
Have more kindly judgment given.

"For the Love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind!

"Pining souls! Come nearer Jesus!
And oh! come not doubting thus,
But with faith that trusts more bravely
His great tenderness for us.

"If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word,
And our lives would be all sunshine,
In the sweetness of our Lord!

See, then, how Jesus comes to meet that poor weak disciple of His, who wanted to believe, but could not.

(V. 26.) A week has passed since His last visit; and again the disciples are "within," — "the doors being shut"; — "and Thomas with them."

"Then came Jesus!" "The doors being shut" could not keep Him out.

Mark this, in passing. No outward circumstances can separate your soul from Jesus. (Matt. xiv. 25.) If you have lost the sense of His Presence, do not lay the blame on your

“circumstances.” Do not grieve your God and please the Devil, by giving way to that fretful, murmuring, impatient spirit which springs from Pride. “The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” (Eccles. vii. 8.) Whatever may be the cause of this trial, humble yourself, and trust your God, just as you would try to do in any other sort of trial; and then, “in due time,” “your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” (Read the Exhortation in the “Visitation of the Sick;” also Ps. xiii.; xxx.; xl. 1—3; lxxvii. 7—12. Is. l. 10; lvii. 15—19. Lam. iii. 25—33. Micah vii. 8, 9. John xvi. 20—22. 1 Pet. v. 5—10.)

Mark this also: Jesus delights to come to those whose doors are “shut.”—When sickness or sorrow has shut your door on all others, or “when thou hast shut thy door” to pray, *then*—expect the special Presence of Jesus. (Ps. xli. 3; xl. 17. Is. xli. 17, 18. John xiv. 18. 2 Cor. i. 5. Rev. i. 9—18. Mark iv. 34.)

As before, the first words of Jesus are—?

("Peace be unto you.") He did not say it once too often. "He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. ciii. 14.) He knows we need peace, in such a world as this.

It is worth having—a peace that can *keep* our hearts and minds, in life and death !

One of our first London Physicians, after feeling the pulse of a patient whom he had just told that he was a dying man, said ; "That pulse is the pulse of a man who is at peace with God !"

If you want such peace as that, you must gain it "through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 7.) "He *is* our Peace." (Eph. ii. 14.) No voice but His can say, with *power* : "Peace be unto you !"

So far, Thomas had only been treated like the other ten, outwardly ;—though Jesus had not forgotten *him* when He said "Peace be unto you."—He will never forget *you*, in the crowd !

(V. 27.) But now He has something to say to Thomas himself. Read His words. They show that He *knew* how sorely his

faith had been tempted, how weak it had been, and what unbelieving words he had said.

In what way does He show Thomas that He knew it all? "Reach hither thy finger," &c.—The very proof that Thomas had asked for! How tender! How kind! That act of Jesus must have made Thomas more ashamed of his doubts, than any harsh act or hard words could have done.

Yet Jesus adds a word of reproof. What is it? ("Be not faithless, but believing.") Do you think this makes His love to Thomas seem less,—or more? If He had not loved Thomas very much, would He have taken so much pains to show him his fault? (Rev. iii. 19.)

(V. 28.) Thomas doubts no longer. Like the others,—though the joy comes a week later,—he is "glad," for he has "seen the Lord!"

What does he call the risen Saviour? "*My* Lord, and *my* God!"—Do not rest till you can look up in the Face of Jesus

Christ, and say those words to *Him*—yes, straight to Him! (See Ps. lxiii. 1. Song Sol. ii. 16.)

(V. 29.) He saw; and “because” he had seen, he believed. He was happier than while He doubted, of course.

Yet—lay this to heart—he was *not so “blessed” as you and I are, if we believe!* For what does Jesus Himself say? “Blessed are they which have *not* seen, and yet have believed.” How often we think: “If I could but *see* Jesus for five minutes!” . . . But those “five minutes” would rob us of the blessing here promised!

In this life, we never *shall* see Jesus, except by faith. We must believe without seeing, or—not at all. (2 Cor. v. 7, Heb. xi. 1.)

But if we want help and comfort, we shall find it in this story—this true story! Let it show us the heart of Jesus toward *us*. Will He do less for us, than He did for Thomas? Nay, He will do *more*. He will answer our poor weak prayer: “Increase our faith,”

(Luke xvii. 5,) and give us the blessedness of those "who have *not* seen, and yet have believed." Heart to heart He will meet us, though not face to face, as yet ; and though now we see him not, yet believing, we shall "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." (1 Pet. i. 8.)

And when once we *do* see Jesus, face to face, we shall never, never lose sight of Him again! Think of that, you that love Him! Think of it, and be patient.

"For if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it!" (Rom. viii. 25.)



Lesson XXV.

"JESUS HIMSELF"—GOING HOME.

Acts. i. 1—11.

WE have spent many happy hours together, following the Lord Jesus, in heart, from place to place. By the help of St. Luke's "former treatise," (*i. e.*, his Gospel,) and by that of the three other Gospels, we have followed Him and "watched" Him "until the day in which He was taken up."

On that day, let us follow Him now.

Our "course of lessons"—on "Jesus Himself"—must come to an end to-day. But has the "subject" come to an end? No! We seem as if only at its beginning!

We have been "like children picking up

pebbles on the sea shore ;” and bright and beautiful have they looked, fresh from “the Ocean of His Love.” But the “Ocean” lies beyond us still !

We have been like travellers going through Switzerland by railway ! What we have seen is just enough to make us wish to go over it all again, and explore for ourselves.

Early in this “course of lessons,” I asked you if you thought we were likely to get tired of our “subject.” You answered, No ! Tell me now,—were you right, or wrong ?

Has not the “Pearl of great price” seemed more precious than ever, each time we have looked upon it by the light of the Holy Spirit ?

Earnestly I hope that none of you have got tired of hearing of Jesus ! If you have, it is no good sign. It is like the Israelites, who got tired of “angels’ food,” and said : “There is nothing at all, besides this manna !” (Numb. xi. 6.) What would you do in Heaven ?

Earnestly I hope, that each one of you feels, as we come to this our last "Lesson," *how little* has been told you, compared with what there is to tell.

We have not even *attempted* to look at *all* the pictures of His Life in these holy Gospels. And in those which we *have* looked at together, I have not had time to point out to you all I see myself; and yet this is little indeed, compared with what there is to see.

If, then, you have felt, at the end of each "Lesson" — and especially when telling Jesus about it afterwards—"The half was not told me!"—this is just what I should love to hear. I should love to think that you had, as it were, got out at every "station," and explored for yourselves. And if now, at the end of our journey, you have determined to go over every inch of the ground once more, with the Holy Spirit alone for your "Guide," I thank God indeed!

Be sure of this: that those who have

really learnt the most, will most feel how little they have learnt.

It was just because St. Paul had learnt to know Christ so well, that his greatest desire on earth was this: "That I may know Him!" (Phil. iii. 10.) Perhaps it is his desire still, and will be—and ours also,—to all Eternity! "To know the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!" (Eph. iii. 19.) It will occupy us for ever!

That we may this day learn to "know Him" a little better, let us come and look at the picture given us by St. Luke, of Jesus "going Home." And may the Holy Spirit explain it to us!

How long did Jesus stay in the world, after His Resurrection? ("Forty days.")

"Forty great days" were these! "I should like to have been with Him *then*!" A day with Jesus during that time would have been worth more than any that came before it:—more than "that day" which John's two disciples spent with Him;—

(John i. 39;)—more than even that visit which Zacchæus had from Him in His own house!

But why were these “forty days” so wonderfully precious?

For three reasons.

(1.) Their Lord was “alive after His Passion”—*i. e.*, Suffering—the Suffering of Death!

What should we feel, in seeing among us again—in the family circle, or in God’s house—some friend who had been “face to face with death,” and whose recovery has seemed quite a “resurrection?” (See Phil. ii. 26—30.)

How should we look on any one—even if not a personal friend—who had gone through some terrible scene of danger or suffering, and had come forth alive to tell the tale? For instance, a survivor from “the Well of Cawnpore,” or from some other fearful scene in the history of the Indian Mutiny!

Must not Daniel and his three friends have been looked upon with awe, when they

came forth from "the den of lions," and from "the burning fiery furnace?" (See Dan. vi. 19—23 ; iii. 24—27.)

We could not begin common intercourse with such as these, especially if they were dear to us already, without awe as well as thankfulness.

And yet, in all these cases, though there seemed "but a step between" them "and death," (1 Sam. xx. 3,) *that* "step" had never been passed over. No friend was ever yet brought back to us from *beyond* the grave.

How then should we look on a friend, or even on a stranger, restored from death itself?—When the Jews came in crowds to Bethany, "where Lazarus was, which had been dead," it was "not for Jesus' sake only." (John xii. 1, 2, 9—11.) Why then? "That they might see Lazarus." What then must his own sisters have felt, when they saw Lazarus among "them that sat at the table with Him!" While "Martha served," and Mary went back to her old

place, at "the feet of Jesus," their hearts must have been full indeed! The Lazarus on whom all eyes were fixed—was their own brother!

And this Jesus, who "shewed Himself alive after His Passion" unto "the Apostles whom he had chosen"—what was He to them?—A "Brother?" Yes, and more than a brother! For Him, they had "forsaken all;" (Matt. xix. 27;) and never had they found cause to regret it. In losing Him—as they thought they had done—they would have lost their all! When, therefore, they saw Him again, "alive after His Passion," what words can tell their joy!

(2.) They knew that He would not stay long.

He had told them so already. (John xiii. 33; xiv. 2, 4, 12, 19, 28; xvi. 5—7, 16, 28; xvii. 1, 11.) The words He now adds point to the same thing. (Compare Acts i. 4, 8, with John xvi. 7, and other verses just quoted.)

Does He tell them exactly how long He

will stay? No; but He says: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost"—how soon? ("Not many days hence.") And they knew that this could not be, till Jesus had gone away. (John xvi. 7.)

Well might they prize these "forty days!" They knew that any of His sweet visits might prove to be the last.

You that know what it is to have "a visit from the Holy One," will you try to remember that any such may be your last? When the Lord Jesus draws near, and gives you intercourse with Him—such as no words can describe to those who have not tasted it,—“Rejoice with trembling!” Use the opportunity well: it may be your last on earth;—your starting-point for Eternity!

The disciples knew they must soon lose sight of Jesus; and their joy must have been clouded by sorrow.

But yet, it was not like losing Him, that first time. For then, He had left them, to go and bear—? (The Cross.) And now, He leaves them, to wear—? (The Crown!)

Their sorrow must have been like the quiet sorrow of Christian friends, when watching some loved one lie at Heaven's gate, waiting to be let in. For when we know that the words—so often mis-applied!—can be applied with truth to that loved friend: "It will be a happy release!"—"Our loss will be his gain!"—then, because we love him, we can rejoice in his joy. And day by day—even when the body is most weak and suffering—we seem to be watching the soul's ascension into Heaven!

Must not these "forty days"—each day nearer to the great "Ascension Day"—have been something like this? "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father." (John xiv. 28.)

(3.) Jesus was the "Same" as ever:—and yet,—more than ever!

It was the same Jesus that they had known and loved before "His Passion;" and yet,—not the same! Something more than they had ever seen in Him before, they see in Him now.

He was still a "Man;" "like unto His brethren," with "flesh and bones" like theirs; so that they "did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." (Luke xxiv. 15, 16, 18, 36—43. Acts x. 40, 41.) Yes, it was "His own Self," Who had borne their sins, "in His own Body, on the tree!" (1 Pet. ii. 24.) In that Body, He stood before them. Had not all of them—and Thomas especially—had "infallible proofs" of this?

And yet, what had Thomas himself exclaimed, when convinced that it was indeed "the Man Christ Jesus?" "My Lord and my GOD!" (John xx. 28.) Others had called Him "SON of God" already. (John i. 49. Matt. xvi. 16.) But had any disciple of His acknowledged Him as "God?"

More and more plainly, during those forty days, Thomas and the rest must have seen that He was "GOD." He "went in and out" among them, still; (Acts i. 21, 22;) but their intercourse was on a different footing. He was not with them all day and every day, as

before. He entered where "the doors were shut;"—"vanished out of sight" in a moment;—"appeared in another form" when He pleased. (John xx. 19, 26. Luke xxiv. 31. Mark xvi. 12.)

It was as "GOD manifest in the flesh"—"GOD with us,"—that they saw Him after His Resurrection, (1 Tim. iii. 16. Matt. i. 23.)

His human heart was just the same; as full of love and sympathy as ever. (See—and look carefully into—John xxi. 5—13.) He cared for each and all of them—had His eye on the Past, and Present, and Future, of each—as much as ever. (Study John xxi. 15—23.)

And yet, a change had come over Him—a mysterious change. The "natural body," "sown in weakness," seemed to have been "raised in power;"—"a spiritual body!" I cannot explain it. I cannot understand it. We must wait, to understand it, till "we shall be changed" ourselves. (1 Cor. xv. 35, 49—53. Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

Till then, we cannot really picture to ourselves "the great forty days." "Many" things which Jesus did at this time "in the presence of His disciples," are not even "*written* in this book." (John xx. 30.) But we have seen, in part, why these "forty days" were so "wonderfully precious."

"Jesus Himself" restored to His own people! It was enough to make them happy!

But was it only to make them happy, that He had come back to them, before "going Home?" No. Let us try to find out what else He had at heart.

Jesus Himself was "going Home." But were they to go with Him? No. (John xvii. 11, 15.) How sad for them! They were to be left alone in the world! Why could they not be allowed to go with Him?—did He not love them?

Do you remember "why" Jesus left the Gadarene in His own country, after saving him from the power of the Devil? To be a

witness for his Saviour. (Mark v. 18—20. See Lesson xv.)

And was it not for the same reason, that the disciples were to be left behind ?

Let us trace it through it these verses. (Vv. 2—8.) But we can only *look* at them, now :—"explore for yourselves," afterwards !

(V. 2.) The word "Apostle" means—? (Sent.) Hitherto, we have known them chiefly by the name of—? ("Disciples.") That is,—learners;—followers. But from the day He chose these twelve "disciples," He had been training them to be "apostles." They were chosen, from the rest of "His disciples," to be "with Him"—more closely and constantly than others,—in order that, afterwards, He might "send them forth to preach" what He had taught them. (Mark iii. 14; iv. 34. Luke vi. 13.)

He was their "Master and Lord;" they were His pupils, and His servants. (John xiii. 13, 16, 34, 35.) To them, therefore, He gave "commandments," before He went away.

(V. 3.) His last teachings were—on what subject? “The Kingdom of God.” As before; in public and in private. (Mark i. 14, 15; iv. 11.) And, though “the Holy Ghost was not yet given,” Jesus may have taught them many things about “the Kingdom of God,” at this time, which they could not have borne before.

(V. 4.) What did He command them? Why not “depart from Jerusalem” to begin their work, at once? Could they not do that work till they had received “the Promise of the Father?”

(V. 5.) Was it sure to come? And that, before long?

(Vv. 6, 7.) Did He tell them more of His plans and purposes than was needed for their practical work?

(V. 8.) “But”—for that work—would “power” be given? By what means? “The Holy Ghost.” (Compare John xiv. 25, 26; xv. 26, 27; xvi. 12—14.)

Even an earthly friend may become better known to us by letters sent afterwards, than

by words spoken at the time. And Jesus became better known to His disciples by means of that Spirit Whom He sent afterwards to explain His past teachings, than He had ever been before. (See John xii. 16.)

This made them fit for their great work as Christ's "apostles,"—or, as He here calls them, His—? ("Witnesses." See Acts iv. 8—13, 20, 31.)

Where was the work to begin? ("In Jerusalem.") "Charity begins at home." (See John i. 41.)

But was it in Jerusalem only, that they were to bear witness? No. Where besides? "Unto the uttermost part (then known) of the earth."

Such were the last teachings of the great Teacher; the last commands of the great Master.

Have they not a voice for you and me? Have *we* no part or lot in His last commands, as told us here, and in John xiii.—xvii.? Are not *we* among the "servants" to whom

He has said: "Occupy till I come?" (Luke xix. 13.)

Yes! If we have,—in this Bible-Class and elsewhere — "learned Christ," and "heard Him," and "been taught by Him," (Eph. iv. 20, 21,) it is not for our own sakes only. "Freely ye have received; freely give." (Matt. x. 8.)

Attend to your Lord's last wishes! "Bear witness" for Him, by the Holy Spirit's help, wherever you go. Attempt nothing by your "own power or holiness," or you are as sure to fail, as if you tried to take a photograph, without a "prepared plate" first, and a "dark room" afterwards, to "develop the likeness!" Be emptied of self; "be filled with the Spirit;" (Eph. v. 18;) and each of you shall be an "epistle of Christ," "known and read of all men," (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.) "Not only with our lips;" and not only with our lives; but with life and lips together, we may—and we *must*—tell all that we know ourselves about the Lord Jesus Christ!

(V. 9.) The Parting must come at last! We have put it off as long as we can; we must go through it now.

The last command has been spoken; the last wish expressed; the last promise given. And then, as St. Luke tells us, "He led them out, as far as to Bethany."

He shall be *our* "Leader" too! We will follow Him to the last, as Elisha followed Elijah, saying: "I will not leave thee!" (2 Kings ii. 1—15.) To Elisha was promised a special blessing—"if thou *see* me when I am taken from thee." May we not hope for one last special blessing to descend on us from our dear Lord, as we stand and watch Him "going Home?"

See! He lifts up His once-pierced Hands! (Luke xxiv. 50.) Thomas, and the rest, were there, beholding. Surely they saw in those Hands "the print of the nails," till they lost sight of Him altogether.

But it was not to remind Thomas of his unbelief, that Jesus "lifted up His Hands"

at that last moment. They were lifted up to bless His people !

“ And it came to pass, while He blessed them ”—what “ came to pass ? ” “ He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.”

That unfinished Blessing was His only unfinished act on earth ! He will come back one day, to give the rest of it !

For what was the angels’ message to the disciples, as they stood “ gazing up into Heaven ? ” (“ This same Jesus . . . shall so *come* in like manner as ye have seen Him go to Heaven.” V. 11.)

“ In like manner ! ”

(1.) “ A *cloud* received Him out of their sight.” And “ behold, He cometh with clouds.” (Rev. i. 7. Dan. vii. 13. Matt. xxiv. 30 ; xxvi. 64. 1 Thess. iv. 17.)

(2.) “ *While they beheld*, He was taken up.” And when He comes again, “ every eye shall see Him.” (Rev. i. 7. Matt. xxiv. 26, 27.)

(3.) “ HE was taken up.” He Himself,

bodily:—not His spirit only. With that human Body,—glorious and spiritual, yet human still,—that Body on which could still be traced “the print of the nails,”—“He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” (Mark xvi. 19.) And “when He shall appear,” it shall be “in like manner.” (See verses already quoted—Rev i. 7, &c.; also 1 Cor. xv. 49. Acts xvii. 31.) “We look for the SAVIOUR, the Lord JESUS CHRIST,” (Phil. iii. 20,)—“this same JESUS!”

Meanwhile, though “we see not yet all things put under Him,” “we see Jesus Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.” (Heb. ii. 9. Acts v. 31.)

“We *see* Jesus?”—Yes, by faith, we *do* “see” Him. (Heb. xii. 2.)

The heavens will not open, to our bodily eye, “for all our gazing.” But if we *could* “see the heavens opened,” as Stephen did, we should see what Stephen saw:—“the Son

of MAN standing on the right hand of GOD." (Acts vii. 55, 56.)

For *there He is*, to this day :—"the MAN Christ Jesus!" (1 Tim. ii. 5. Rev. i. 18.)

And sometimes, when we "look up" into the blue sky,—as JESUS HIMSELF did when speaking to His Father, (Mark vi. 41; vii. 34. John xi. 41; xvii. 1,)—when we look up, *towards* Him "Whom, having not seen," we "love,"—as Daniel prayed with his windows open "*towards* Jerusalem," (Dan. vi. 10,)—we may try to picture what lies beyond. We may say—what little children are taught to say,—and try to say it with a child's simple faith :

"When I look up to yonder sky,
So pure, so bright, so wondrous high,
I think of One I cannot see,
But One Who sees—and cares for—*me* !"

We can "look *up*"—as we look at some pot on earth where we last saw an earthly friend—and say : It was in *that* direction that He vanished out of sight! He is "gone into Heaven." (John xiv. 4. 1 Pet.

iii. 22.) And then, we may "in heart and mind thither ascend," and, as we whisper that Name, "Lord JESUS," realize, — as Stephen did, when he said, "Lord JESUS, receive my spirit!"—that we are speaking—not "into the air," but *to* "JESUS HIMSELF,"—a real, living Saviour, Whose eye is on us, and Whose ear is listening.

"Unto THEE lift I up mine eyes, O THOU that dwellest in the heavens!" (Ps. cxxiii. 1.)

It has been said: "Most Christians are content with a *dead* Saviour!"

But is it of "a *dead* Saviour" that we have been reading, Sunday after Sunday?

No, thank God! These are not the "Memoirs" of a dead man!—of some holy man whose spirit—now "with Christ"—*may* not even know that those "Memoirs" have been read or written! It is in the presence—the spiritual presence—of JESUS HIMSELF, that we have been reading these stories of His earthly life. His own Spirit

dictated them: and He Himself has been "in the midst" of us to explain them, by that same Spirit.

And if we have learnt in this way to know Jesus "as He was on earth," it is that we may—do something more than try to follow His example and cherish His *memory*! It is that we may—"know Him"—"as He is"—in "Heaven itself!" It is that we may "in heart and mind thither ascend, and *with Him continually dwell*." It is that we may hold intercourse with Him there, day after day. It is that we may look, and long, and love—"because He first loved us,"—till the Love of Christ becomes the "Ruling Passion" of our lives!

For—"where your TREASURE is, there will your heart be also."

Go home now, and tell Him what you have heard. Go home, and ask Him if it is true. Go home, and ask Him to *tell you the rest!*

You will never fully know how insufficient, and poor, and weak, have been all *my* "Teachings," till they have sent you away from the earthly Teacher to sit at the feet of—

"JESUS HIMSELF!"





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